



EPOCH OF TWILIGHT

BOOK 02

Don't Play People For A Fool

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Epoch of Twilight

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by

Don't Play People For A Fool

Synopsis

Have you ever thought that the state of the world as it presently is, could revert to the laws of the ancients? When a series of strange incidents beginning with the disappearance of his friend led Luo Yuan to question the possibility of an apocalypse, he becomes embroiled in the midst of a global-scale chaos.

Evolution has turned the flora and fauna of the vast and bountiful Earth into something that had never been seen before. Coincidentally, the all-dominating Homo sapiens have ended up at the bottom of the food chain. From mystery to crisis, will Luo Yuan discover a means of saving humanity by racing to the top of the food chain? Or will he strive in accordance with the law of the jungle? It is the dawn of an age of the survival of the fittest.

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Chapter 101: Light

Although the men had experienced the anxiousness and excitement of land clearing, they did not seem to be able to rest in the evening.

After they enjoyed their lunch, they started to move into their new house.

Nobody would complain about having too many things during such dire times. Even a broken chair could be useful as it could be used as firewood. However, they realized that they had too many possessions when they started moving them.

Beds, quilts, furniture, grains, clothes, gasoline, electric generators, spices, woks, bowls... Carrying everything drained both their energy and time.

When they moved it all into the new house, it was around dusk.

Everyone was delighted, but the newcomers even more so, because they no longer had to squeeze in with the rest of them. Men had it better than women because they didn't experience some of the inconveniences and embarrassments that women did. Women had to avoid others just to go to the bathroom.

The new house was larger than their old one. The empty rooms were enough so two could share one bedroom while a few lucky ones could have a whole room to themselves.

Luo Yuan got the master bedroom. The wedding picture of the previous owners had been thrown in the dustbin, the bedroom had been cleaned and the original quilt had been replaced with a quilt they had brought from their old house.

That wasn't because the quilt used to belong to a dead man. After all, everyone was familiar with death by now. If death had been a taboo, they might not have been able to eat those mutated beasts in the city as none of them had ever eaten a man before.

Although they had finished moving into their new home, their job was far from done. The whole villa had been preserved perfectly after an attack from a large group of mutated beasts, but all the windows had been broken, so the house was not safe to inhabit yet. Of course Luo Yuan did not expect the villa to protect them from large-sized mutated beasts, but at least prevent smaller dangerous creatures, such as mutated mosquitoes, from entering.

He searched throughout the district and by a stroke of luck, he found a few packs of cement in a small storeroom in an underground parking area. He, Huo Dong and the others collected some bricks, mixed the cement with water and filled the windows, the holes, the air-conditioning pipes and the lampblack absorbers.

When they filled in the last window, the whole house suddenly became as dark as an ancient building, the only natural light source being the open door.

The house might have been dark, but they all felt secure. Lastly,

Luo Yuan moved the electric generator to the basement and started it. The generator produced a loud noise, and suddenly the whole villa was lit up.

He had started the electric generator in the basement because he had thought that perhaps the previous owner of the house had an unusual hobby and had designed his basement area to be soundproof. As expected, when he closed the door, most of the noise was muffled.

Meanwhile, in the living room, there was so much excitement that a lot of them were crying out in joy. It had felt like that they'd gone back to the old days when they saw the bright white lights turn on.

Luo Yuan smiled while he looked at everyone in excitement. Even the most demure person could not have controlled their emotions during such a time. They had never expected that they would see the lights on again, just like they had never expected that the lights, which they had taken for granted in the old days, would move them so deeply that day.

"I want to charge my cell phone." Ning Xiaoran wiped her tears away. She looked like she had just thought of something, and she started rummaging through her pockets, but she could not find her phone. Maybe she had lost it somewhere. She was so worried, she looked close to tears.

"You can use mine!" Cao Lin comforted her while she took her own cell phone out of her pocket, found a plug to charge it, and pressed the switch-on button.

“Yes, yes!” Ning Xiaoran twisted the corner of her shirt while she nodded thankfully. Her eyes were staring at the cell phone, which turned on with a melodious sound.

Soon, the others took out their cell phones too, charging and turning them on.

They were all silent, their excitement replaced by worry and depression.

“Why don't you go charge your phone?” Luo Yuan asked Huang Jiahui.

“No, it's alright.” Huang Jiahui gave him a forced smile. “Actually, I could no longer make calls, even before my battery ran out.”

“Brother Luo, could you please lend me your phone? I want to call my parents. Hopefully, I can still reach them,” Wang Shishi, who was standing beside them, suddenly requested. Her little face was somber, as if she was trying to remain calm.

As he looked at this little girl, who was not even 14 years old yet, Luo Yuan felt touched. “Wait, let me get my phone from upstairs.”

Luo Yuan ran to the master bedroom on the second floor, rummaged around and found his cell phone and a charger inside the folder where he'd put miscellaneous things. Then he walked

down to the first floor, charged the cell phone and turned it on. He tried to comfort Wang Shishi, “Don't worry, everything will be alright soon.”

“Brother Luo, you don't have to comfort me. I'm not holding out much hope anyway. It wouldn't have taken them so long to look for me if....” Wang Shishi did not finish her sentence. She could no longer control her emotions. She just burst into uncontrollable tears. The rest of her sentence was replaced by the sound of her weeping.

“There's no signal anymore,” Cao Lin said seriously as she stared at her phone. Immediately, Ning Xiaoran's face turned pale and she sat down on the sofa helplessly while Huo Dong put down his cell phone and sighed in disappointment. The atmosphere had become oppressive.

Luo Yuan looked at his phone until it finally turned on; there was no signal at all, but there was an unread message. Considering the phone could not receive messages without a signal, obviously it had received the message when the battery was not yet completely empty and had turned off automatically before he'd had time to read it.

Surprisingly, the message was from Huang Xianguang. Luo Yuan took a deep breath and read the message word by word. It took him a few minutes to read it, even though it was quite short.

“Luo Yuan, come find us if you're still in Hedong City. My dad and his friends have built a small underground station. I know that you don't like relying on others, but safety is more important than

pride. If you can't find a good hiding place, you can come to ours. The address is Dongguang Area, Anxie Noble District 18."

After his last meeting with Huang Xianguang at Donghu Park, he had never seen her again. After he had rejected her affections repeatedly, he had hurt her deeply and their relationship had gradually cooled until they had eventually lost contact. Luo Yuan had forgotten about her gradually, so he had not expected that she would still be concerned about his safety.

It was Huang Xianguang though, who had taken the initiative to notify Luo Yuan so that he could manage to leave Donghu City with the first group of people. Though Luo Yuan could be cold-blooded while facing his enemies, he was still capable of emotion.

"Anxie Noble District 18. It doesn't sound far from here," Luo Yuan said to himself.

Everyone was relatively quiet during dinner. They seemed to have something on their minds and they did not eat much.

In order to save on the diesel, Luo Yuan turned off the electric generator before they went to bed and switched the flashlight on his phone.

As soon as he walked into the bedroom, Huang Jiahui shut the door like a thief. When she turned to him, her face was blushing. She was breathing fast, her eyes were moistened, and she looked hot and seductive.

Luo Yuan could not help but be turned on by such an obvious signal. He had not had sex for a long time and he was excited. Plus, after his Physique had been enhanced by the AP, his body attributes had been balanced, and he could now fully control himself. He just couldn't wait to test his skill in bed again.

If it wasn't for Wang Shishi, who kept sleeping in the same room with them, he would not have resisted.

They did not speak, they just embraced each other and kissed passionately. Luo Yuan's hands quickly moved to her chest and rubbed her bosom, kneading it into various shapes. Their breathing got quicker and Luo Yuan could no longer hold back. He pressed her against the wall, untied her belt impatiently and took off hers pants along with her underwear. Then he turned her around and let her lean against the wall.

"Bed!" Huang Jiahui turned, her voice trembling as her face burned hot.

"Let's do it here," Luo Yuan insisted.

Under the light of the cell phone's flashlight, her butt was white and plump like a full moon. Luo Yuan enjoyed it rubbing it, letting his fingers run over it again and again. After consuming high-rank mutated beasts for such a long time, Huang Jiahui's skin had become delicate and smooth like silk.

Her whole body was blushing and it felt extremely hot.

Luo Yuan stroke her for a while, until he could not resist anymore. Then he untied his belt, took out his member and slowly inserted it.

He took a deep breath and slowly breathed out again.

It was not just Huang Jiahui's skin that was boiling hot, she was hot inside too; obviously she had been abstaining for a long time. When his member was in, Huang Jiahui started moaning in pleasure while her insides started to contract and twist. She had to be very aroused.

As Luo Yuan gradually moved faster, Huang Jiahui could not support her body anymore. Her hands that had been holding the wall started to slide down.

“I can't, I can't do it anymore...” Huang Jiahui's hair was disheveled, her forehead was covered in sweat and her voice was sobbing.

Luo Yuan opened his eyes wide, tightly holding and supporting her soft white butt. His speed got faster as his stomach and her butt hit against each other intensely.

Huang Jiahui knew that Luo Yuan was almost there so she said, “These days are safe!”

Luo Yuan growled, hugged Huang Jiahui tightly and held her butt still.

As they were enjoying the aftertaste of their arousal, there was a sudden knock on the door.

“Brother Luo, Sister Huang, I can’t sleep. I want to sleep with you.”

Luo Yuan was annoyed and wondered why he had not realized earlier how inappropriate it was for all of them to sleep together.

When he had first met Wang Shishi, she had still been a kid, and thus he had viewed her as one. What had happened the previous night though had made him realize that Wang Shishi was no longer a kid. She was mature, at least mentally. It was not right for them to sleep together anymore.

Most importantly, it was what Huang Jiahui would have wanted. He tried his best to advise her, “Didn’t you use to sleep alone before? You’ll get used to it again after a few days.”

“But if I don’t hug you while I sleep, I’ll have nightmares!” Wang Shishi said tenderly as she pursed her lips. Her voice sounded upset like she had somehow been wronged.

Luo Yuan felt almost soft-hearted, but he had to be strict with her. “Don’t look for excuses. Be a good girl and go back to sleep.”

“I’m missing my mom and dad.” Wang Shishi had finally decided to play her trump card.

Luo Yuan and Huang Jiahui looked at each other. Huang Jiahui suddenly sighed and said, “Just let her in!”

Then she took a piece of tissue and wiped her private parts. After she had properly cleaned up, she went over and opened the door.

Chapter 102: The Battle Beast

Lately, the weather seemed to be getting hotter and it would only rain every few days.

If they went by the old calendar, it would already have been spring. Ever since the world had started to mutate, winter had ended in the blink of an eye.

“This is the Beijing People's Radio Station, this is the Beijing People's Radio Station! We are broadcasting to the survivors around the world... As of today, we can no longer receive any signal from Africa or Australia. On the other hand, the signal from most regions in South America, part of Europe and South East Asia is intermittent; the conditions are rather worrying...”

“...This is a war between humans and nature. The survival of mankind is being greatly challenged and the conditions are getting worse. Under the leadership of the government, China has built large defense stations in Beijing, Tibet, Qinghai, Urumqi and Takla Makan, and is changing its war strategy. If any survivors hear this news, please spread it. Reporting again...”

“Now reporting the international news. America and Canada have officially signed an ad hoc agreement on war strategy to develop an ice field on the northern part of Canada. This agreement also means that other than the few important local military bases, the whole population of America will be moved.”

“Russia's capital, Moscow, discovered a constant high-energy

source which lasted for 6 minutes and 15 seconds before it disappeared oddly this morning from satellite images. Moscow is currently temporarily out of contact...”

“According to the news we received from Japan, the vice president, Yamamoto Ichirou, who visited China on February 27, was killed when a plane crashed on the surface of the sea...”

Listening to the sounds transmitted from the cellphone’s radio receiver, Luo Yuan became serious.

It had been a short winter and human beings had been retreating towards the highlands, the desert and the ice fields, where humans and most living things could not have survived during the old days. Apparently, the situation was worse than Luo Yuan had imagined.

Suddenly, a heavy tremor came from outside.

“I was worried I wouldn’t find you, but now you’re here!” Luo Yuan raised his eyebrows and removed the earphones. He put his cellphone on the table, grabbed his Zhanmadao and rushed out of the house as everyone looked at him uneasily.

He strode quickly, each stride about 3 meters long, until he reached the origin of the tremor after a few minutes.

It was a huge beast that looked like a lizard. It was 3 meters tall and about 6 meters long, tail included. Its body was emerald green

and its head had a spiral-shaped black taper horn that was not mature yet. It was very small in size, barely half a foot long, and looked weird compared to its otherwise large body.

The huge beast had been lingering near the district for two days. It had been hesitating, but that day it had finally decided to move closer.

It breathed heavily and occasionally jetted out white mist. Its ferocious giant claws tramped impatiently as it howled defiantly.

The previous day, Luo Yuan had found the reaction of the huge beast strange, but now he finally understood. This district had originally been occupied by the haunted locust tree. All the mutated beasts in the area had possessed about the same kind of strength, so peace had been possible to maintain.

After the haunted locust tree had been chopped off by Luo Yuan though, its breaths had become weaker, and the mutated beasts nearby had started to expand their territory.

This was the first mutated beast to come over.

For a blue rank mutated beast that had recently been chased out of its territory, it was very lucky to find an unoccupied territory in this city.

The abject mutated beast's body was filled with various wounds and many of its scales had dropped off. Some were recent wounds,

and its body was still bleeding from them. Apparently, stray life was not easy.

However, the beast was very vigilant and seemed extremely prudent. He was sure that it would retreat as soon as it sensed that something was wrong. Besides, it was very fast too. Luo Yuan had wanted to kill it the previous day but it had run away before he was able to do anything about it.

Maybe it was its strategy to survive by wandering and hunting around the territories of other mutated beasts.

Luo Yuan had been worrying that he would fail his mission, but it had come back again.

In order to avoid frightening the beast off once again, Luo Yuan crept on the ground while he slowly moved forward. He even minimized his body aura, just to be safe.

After howling a few times, the beast stopped. It looked like it was observing its surroundings. After a few seconds, it seemed slightly relieved and walked forward into the district.

It howled towards the sky excitedly. All of a sudden, it seemed to intuitively sense the danger. The prism-shaped scale on its tail was slightly open, forming a sawtooth-like shape while its body lowered, its tusk exposed slightly as it gave a warning howl and retreated.

It seemed to have felt something and suddenly turned back. That's when it noticed a small creature heading its way fast. It did not understand and could not believe that these little creatures, which had become its only food source lately, could bring such an immense feeling of danger.

It seemed offended and angry. It even forgot the feeling of danger it had just experienced.

It howled, moving its four limbs wildly and sprinting towards the small creature as the earth around it rumbled.

While it rushed over, it thought that the creature would be like those it had met previously. It expected it to collapse to the ground shaken, but hopefully not excrete. The beast was not particularly picky about food, but the taste was just not as good.

The creature ran very fast.

The beast had limited intelligence, so just at the thought that the little creature had entered its range of attack, it stretched out its neck and bit in that general direction. A stone nearby was crushed into powder.

It instinctively felt that something was wrong as it did not feel the fragrant, sweet taste of blood flowing down its throat. Before it could react, it felt something cool on its front claw and thought it saw a creature slip through while it was still in a state of stupor.

Its broken claw was so painful that the beast howled loudly.

As it dropped off, a large amount of blood burst like a spring from the wound.

Luo Yuan's eyes looked completely ruthless. With the help of the heart of the haunted locust tree, his 14-point Willpower allowed him to protect himself without relying on anger to form an invisible light membrane on his skin. As the air on the surface of the membrane was slightly twisted, he appeared unreal and vague if seen from afar.

The light of the Zhanmadao had also grown about a foot long, and made the sword tougher and sharper.

After Luo Yuan had chopped off the front claw of the huge beast, he did not stop moving. He flexibly slid under its stomach, vertically raising up his Zhanmadao, and taking a few quick steps so that the blade cut through the beast's tough skin, tearing it like a cloth. A big wound formed from the beast's chest to its stomach.

Unfortunately, the beast was too tall and he had only torn open its skin surface because he'd had to lower his center of gravity in order to run faster and maintain his body balance. Otherwise, the giant beast would have been killed.

Before it could howl again, Luo Yuan moved briskly from under its stomach.

Luo Yuan's actions were dazzling. It was only the first round, but the giant beast was already severely injured.

The fight was not over yet, though. Walking on tiptoe, Luo Yuan stepped on its giant leg the size of a bucket and, using both his hands, he flipped and stood up on the back of the giant beast. He could control his strength to a micro extent. Combined with his high-speed reflective neurons, Luo Yuan could step into the air and walk for about five steps. He could climb about three meters high on a smooth wall, let alone on this giant beast with the numerous scars and a skin surface as coarse as sandpaper.

The beast finally felt the danger and howled in fury as it shook its body violently, trying to shake him off.

It felt like an earthquake, and any normal person would have fallen.

Luo Yuan remained calm though, lowering his body and shifting his center of gravity in sync with the quake. His body was as stable as a tree with strong taproots into the ground.

Suddenly, a sharp hissing sound came from the back. Luo Yuan had predicted it and he quickly stepped backward, moving aside slightly while he swung his knife sideways and upwards, cutting the giant beast's sawtooth-like tail into two.

He lost his energy balance for a while, and he swayed before taking a deep breath and slowly stepping forward, gradually increasing his speed. Although he was still stumbling at first, his

body became more stable as he moved forward.

It took Luo Yuan only a few seconds to reach the beast's head. It could not shake him off, no matter how hard it tried.

Luo Yuan raised his Zhanmadao, which had a sharp light on its edge, and emitted a strong aura that unexpectedly suppressed the terrifying beast.

He could feel its body start to shiver. Just as Luo Yuan was about to kill it with his knife and take some of its meat back to the villa though, the giant beast reacted oddly.

It suddenly lay down with its head close to the ground and whimpered for mercy. Under the oppressing fear of death, it had stopped resisting, like a weak prey surrendering itself to its opponent.

Luo Yuan was shocked. He had never thought that a mutated beast could have such a reaction. He had never seen such a thing.

He hesitated and jumped down from its head. Meanwhile, he looked at the beast vigilantly while he thought of ten different methods of counteracting.

In fact, Luo Yuan was not worried about the beast. After all, he had just chopped off part of its leg and half its tail, and there was a severe wound on its stomach, so it could hardly run away.

The beast was not moving, but its shivers became more intense as it seemed to sense Luo Yuan's gaze.

"Maybe it's surrendering?" Luo Yuan said to himself while he rubbed his chin.

"It seems to have totally given up. Shall I just kill it?" Luo Yuan couldn't decide. If the mutated beast had kept resisting, Luo Yuan would have killed it off right away, but under the circumstances, he felt uneasy killing it.

Yet, he was reluctant. Double the EXP would be deducted if he failed the mission. He would need to complete at least two E Level Missions to compensate for the lost EXP. Worst case scenario, he would need to complete three.

"Alright, I'll just kill it. After all, there's no morality between humans and mutated beasts. Besides, killing a mutated beast would save thousands of human lives. There would be one less mutated beast eating humans." After Luo Yuan weighed the pros and cons, he no longer hesitated.

There was a light on the blade of Zhanmadao as he walked towards the giant beast.

The beast seemed to feel its imminent death; it shivered intensely while it shrunk into its own body. Once someone had lost the courage to fight, it was difficult to get it back. Both humans and mutated beasts were alike that way.

The giant beast had given up the fight and was only waiting for its death.

Suddenly, there was a system notification.

“The blue rank creature Giant Jungle Lizard has paid obeisance to you, Keep as a battle beast, Decline/ Accept?”

Luo Yuan was shocked for a while. He thought he must have been mistaken. When he recovered from the shock, he accepted the request and the body of the Giant Jungle Lizard started to shake while its head swayed.

He opened his attribute table and discovered that there was a new option for battle beasts at the bottom. The drop-down box had an attribute table exclusively for battle beasts, too.

“Battle Beast: Giant Jungle Lizard”

“Level: 0 (Blue)”

Attributes:-

Strength: 18 (10)

Dexterity: 12 (10)

Physique: 17 (10)

Intelligence: 3 (10)

Sensory Perception: 4 (10)

Willpower: 11(10)

EXP: 0/2400

Skills: Pouncing and Biting 14, Tail Attack 15, Field Survival 18

Special Abilities: Instinct for Danger

Condition: Weak

Loyalty: 55 (May rebel or run away if less than 50, Maximum 100)

Unassigned AP: 0

Unassigned SP: 5

Its attributes were indeed valiant. 18 points of Strength were almost 7.5 times higher than his and 16 times higher than a normal person's. Its Physique was 3.3 times higher than Luo Yuan's and 10 times higher than a normal person's. Its Dexterity was lower, but it was still much stronger than the average person's. Of course,

that was excluding its secondary attributes.

It seemed that the beast could level up just like him. However, Luo Yuan wondered why it needed more EXP than Luo Yuan in order to level up. When he considered the size of its body though, it made sense.

Frankly, he was not clear on how the EXP system worked: Was it based on body size? On separate attributes? Or was it based on overall attributes? Luo Yuan's overall attributes surprisingly reached 76 points. Although the Giant Jungle Lizard's separate attributes were great, its overall attributes reached only 65 points, which was only 5 points higher than average. Luo Yuan guessed that the system might judge based on overall sophisticated factors, which would involve a more complicated formula.

However, he did not remain excited for long as he heard the failed mission notification ring.

“Level E Mission: Kill Giant Jungle Lizard failed, deducting double the basic rewarded EXP, Total 3,200 points.”

Fortunately, Luo Yuan had more than enough EXP, so he did not have to worry about downgrading.

Chapter 103: Chaos

The loss Luo Yuan had suffered was relatively smaller than what he had gained. After becoming his follower, the mutated lizard got up, its body no longer shaking. However, it did not dare go near him. Apparently, it was still scared of Luo Yuan, but that was to be expected. Considering he had just defeated it, its attitude was good enough already. The lizard stepped back when Luo Yuan walked towards it. It only took one step back, and then stopped moving. It just stood there, puffing in frustration. Luo Yuan tried to signal for the lizard to squat down, but apparently, it did not understand his instructions, because all it did was look at him.

He shook his head helplessly before climbing onto its back. It was very wide, but not everyone could have sat on top of it. Its scales were shiny and slippery, and looked like they were coated with a layer of oil. He had to be very careful even though the lizard was staying still. Once it started moving and shaking, any normal person would slide off its back, and if it started running, they would fall instantly.

“Let’s go to the district!” Luo Yuan said as he patted the lizard’s back.

The giant lizard did not respond. Luo Yuan tapped on it harder, until it finally turned around and looked at Luo Yuan innocently, its big eyes looking anxious. Luo Yuan pointed at the entrance of the district, but the lizard did not move. Apparently, he had overestimated its intelligence, which seemed to be lower than a dog’s. Luo Yuan stood up helplessly and walked onto its head. He kept signing and jumped onto the ground every once in a while to do a demonstration. The lizard finally understood what ‘Go’ and

‘Stop’ meant after half an hour.

It finally moved, walking lamely. One of its legs was injured and it had to keep it curled up. It could only rely on its other three legs to move, and it looked pitiful.

“Walk that way!” Luo Yuan kicked it hard on the head. The lizard’s head shook and it turned around.

“Slightly to the right!” Luo Yuan said, kicking the right side of its face.

He kept kicking its head until the lizard began to feel frustrated. It was puffing furiously.

The system immediately sent a warning message, “The loyalty of the lizard has decreased by one point due to unreasonable abuse.”

Luo Yuan was stunned. He could not believe that the lizard could still protest when it was so severely injured. Despite the fact that its loyalty had gone down, he still believed that he could defeat it. He gave it a few kicks again, but the lizard did not seem to feel a thing. His kicks were too weak for the lizard’s 18-point body. Luo Yuan got mad and naturally focused all his energy on his foot before kicking its head again. The lizard suddenly shook its body vigorously and moaned sadly. It went numb and collapsed to the ground before Luo Yuan could react.

“Is it still alive?” Luo Yuan was shocked and he quickly jumped

down from its back to check.

The lizard was still alive, but there seemed to be something wrong with its head. It struggled to stand up, but failed. After a minute it got up again, but its body kept shaking and its eyes looked frightened.

“The loyalty of the lizard has increased by 10 points due to your abuse!”

Luo Yuan felt enlightened. The message had been exactly the same as the previous one, but the result was the total opposite. The first one had been about the decrease of loyalty, while the second one had been about the drastic rise of loyalty. He finally understood the structure between mutants and the gap of power between them. That was the key to beating them, not structural power or sentiment. Apparently, his powerful attack had banished the last bit of protest left within the lizard. All this inspiration crept into his head as he shifted his focus to watch the reaction of the lizard after that powerful kick.

Apparently, the the kick had not been as weak as he had thought. Otherwise, the lizard would not have fallen to the ground. He realized its head was fine, other than the injuries it had already suffered. Ironically, determination was one of the most mysterious elements of the body. Luo Yuan had not managed to master it himself and could only use it passively. He did not even know how its defense system worked exactly. Until now, there had been two conditions under which his determination had taken over. The first one had been whenever he was chopping something with his knife, and the second one when the defense appeared on the

surface of his body.

Theoretically, both were the same thing, so the result should have been similar. However, the two outcomes were totally different. This time, he was not damaging something really tough or defending something, but he had still discovered a new power. There had been no sign or warning before it had happened, it had just appeared randomly. What the heck was determination? Luo Yuan had checked all the properties on the panel when he'd first gotten the system. According to the definition of the term, 'determination' was the subjective reflection of human beings based on their behavior.

From a psychological perspective, determination was the process of humans consciously setting goals and adjusting their actions accordingly by overcoming difficulties in order to achieve those goals. The first definition emphasized on physical actions while the second one emphasized on a psychological interpretation.

"If I combine them, determination is the result of behavior and reaction of the spirit," Luo Yuan whispered to himself.

Suddenly, he was inspired as he remembered a famous religious quote, "God said, 'Let there be light,' and there was light."

He recited it silently a few times before his forehead began to relax.

"Determination! That's the power of determination! God's determination created light!"

"I was wrong! Apparently, determination is not a specific energy, but the reflection of spiritual energy. If I were to name it, I'd call it 'chaos'. It does not have any properties itself, but it can be transformed into various properties."

"Of course my determination is not comparable to the great spiritual energy of God. But what were those reflections I had previously?"

When he'd raised his knife while facing his enemies, the fear in him had made him want to chop down everything, so he had.

When determination spread, although his subjective consciousness had no opinion, his subconscious was still in a state of defense. It was not the violent power that created a powerful defense anymore.

"Then what about this time?" Luo Yuan frowned in deep thought as he tried to figure everything out.

"I definitely don't want to kill my battle beast. My conscious and subconscious would not do anything that would hurt others without any benefit. Living things always make a decision based on the amount of benefits to themselves. Regardless of psychology or biology, they tend to behave in the way that is most beneficial to them. So, I won't kill it."

"This wasn't about defense anyway. Although I don't want to kill it, I still wanted to teach it a lesson, which means that this power

was enough to hurt it, but not kill it. It was just enough to destroy any intention it had to protest.”

Of course, it was meaningless to continue struggling to understand the meaning of determination. Determination changed depending on the intentions of the mind, and humans achieved their goals when their determination grew stronger. It had the power to create a new life or lead one to death. It could make almost every goal come true. Luo Yuan felt enlightened. He stopped thinking and looked at the terrified lizard. He felt relaxed as he jumped on its back once again.

It took Luo Yuan and the lizard a long time to return to the villa because they got lost on the way. When they finally got there, the lizard lay down on the space in front of the villa. It looked like a giant hill, and the ground shook when it walked back to the villa, making everyone inside anxious and afraid. Its appearance had caused an intense fear in the women, but they had been amazed when they saw Luo Yuan standing on top of it. Huang Jiahui would have shot the lizard if Luo Yuan had not been smiling. No one dared get closer. Even Huang Jiahui only looked at it from afar.

Luo Yuan jumped down from the lizard and walked towards her. She looked anxious as she silently cursed Luo Yuan and his recklessness. Although the lizard looked obedient, it could still attack Luo Yuan from the back. If it really attacked him, then... Huang Jiahui immediately turned pale at the thought. She quickly pulled out her gun and aimed at the lizard, ready to shoot anytime if it suddenly attacked him.

The lizard was sensitive to danger and it immediately sensed it when Huang Jiahui aimed at it with her handgun. In fact, the bullets she had in her gun were dark blue rank, which meant they were very powerful. Blue level animals had zero defensive power against dark blue bullets. A less powerful animal could be defeated by the bullets if it got shot at its weakest point. Unfortunately, she did not have many of them left. This was just a handgun after all. She would not need to be worried about dark blue animals if she had a machine gun.

The lizard sensed the danger and immediately curled up its tail, forming a serrated circle while it puffed, vapor coming out of its nose furiously. Huang Jiahui panicked when she saw that the lizard was ready to attack. Her hand that was holding the gun was shaking. She was about to fire.

Suddenly, Luo Yuan turned around and snorted. A strong energy was released from his body, making the lizard step back. He waved at Huang Jiahui, signaling for her to relax. Huang Jiahui looked panicked as she walked quickly towards Luo Yuan. She hugged him tightly and kept punching his back to vent her anxiety as she cried, "Why are you being so reckless? You had me so worried!"

She was terrified. There was a moment when she had thought that she would follow Luo Yuan if he died. She loved him wholeheartedly. They have been through so many ups and downs together for such a long time.

"Why were you worried? I defeated it and made it my battle beast. Don't go closer though, its intelligence is really low. I'll need some time to train it first," Luo Yuan said without thinking,

earning a few more punches from her.

Luo Yuan promised her that he would be more careful when going close to the lizard. He did not really need to worry about the lizard attacking him from the back. He could easily sense its movement as long as it was within his sensory perception range. Besides, the lizard would not betray him while its loyalty remained above 50 points. He was quite confident with the information provided by the system. Anyway, it was difficult for him to explain, and he believed that women would not want to hear that kind of explanation. In fact, an honest promise was the best solution for a woman who cared about his safety.

"Why did you call it a battle beast?" Huang Jiahui asked doubtfully.

Luo Yuan was having a headache. The name had been provided by the system, so he thought of an alternative way to explain, "Actually, all it took was a pat. It was like keeping a dog or cat."

Huang Jiahui looked at the scary lizard doubtfully and realized that no matter how hard she tried, she could not compare it to a cute dog or a cat.

"Does it eat humans?" Huang Jiahui asked anxiously.

"Relax! It's usually very obedient," Luo Yuan said and laughed.

It definitely used to eat humans before, but he would not let it eat

them anymore. The beast lay down in front of the villa and licked its wounds. It was totally a different beast from the one he had met earlier. Huang Jiahui looked at it for quite a while before reluctantly accepting his explanation. Wang Shishi had been hesitated so far, but now she seemed willing to go closer. She peeped at the beast secretly with a little excitement before she asked with a stammer, "Brother Luo, can I... can I also ride on it like you did?"

"Its intelligence level is quite similar to dogs. You can't, because it doesn't know you yet, but it should be fine after a while, when it begins to recognize you," Luo Yuan explained as he laughed.

"Is it real?" Wang Shishi looked enlightened as she smiled. She seemed to be fantasizing about riding the beast in the city.

Chapter 104: Light

The main impact of the lizard was that everyone now tended to avoid looking Luo Yuan in the eye. They were afraid of him, but also respected him. During lunch, Luo Yuan had asked Ning Xiaoran where her hometown was, and she had stood up abruptly and answered anxiously. Luo Yuan had felt strange and he had turned to Huo Dong, the cheerleader among the group. He had also acted weird, which had made Luo Yuan lose any interest in talking to him. In fact, the impact of that incident was actually much greater than Luo Yuan could imagine.

Although the lizard looked quite pitiful with one of its forelimbs severely injured and a big wound on its chest, its giant size still scared everyone away. Even though they were just looking at it from afar, their legs still went numb. They pictured themselves fighting the lizard in their dreams, and most of the time they had nightmares.

Apparently, Luo Yuan was scarier than the lizard, because he was the one who had defeated it. Everyone knew he was the one who had made the wounds on its body, and no one could relax standing beside such a crazy, reckless man.

Up to that point, everyone had thought that Luo Yuan was just strong. They had never seen him fight. They had only ever seen him kill a person. Most of the battles were taken over by Wang Shishi, and many of them actually thought Wang Shishi was more powerful than Luo Yuan. After all, he only killed humans while Wang Shishi killed mutants.

It was a common phenomenon among the women, and they would usually gossip and argue about it. However, the arguments had stopped ever since the lizard had gotten there. Luo Yuan lay down on the deck chair outside after lunch. He had closed his eyes slightly and was enjoying the warm sunshine, feeling a little sleepy. He was still thinking about the issue of Determination and future development.

The system did not provide much information about Determination, except for a few messages. He sensed that Determination would grow stronger in time and even override all the other properties. However, his main concern was that he didn't know how to develop his Determination power. It was too slow for him to upgrade by using the system as every single level required double the amount of the previous level's experience value. However, his physical strength could not cope with the growth and slowed down his upgrade.

He was able to fight blue level animals even though he was at Level 6. Up until now he had been powerful enough to fight blue rank animals, even when he had upgraded to Level 7. He had no confidence that he could fight dark blue rank animals though. Self-training seemed to be the only strategy he could try. His Flexibility had to be the most important property in upgrading his Determination. Maybe Sensory Perception would be beneficial to the upgrade too.

He realized that Sensitivity was very important as well as the stronger the Sensitivity, the easier he could defeat mutants. Sometimes, it was difficult for the naked eye to catch the attacks of mutants, and he needed assistance from Sensitivity to make a decision. Of course, Dexterity was also very important as it helped

him escape when he could not defeat a mutant. Physique was very important for escaping as it would not work if he was weak. If his energy level was high, it would generate an explosive motion in a short distance.

Luo Yuan felt a slight headache and stopped thinking. All the properties seemed to be important. Basically, he could only neglect Intelligence because he knew it would only be useful in peaceful times. During such a chaotic period, the useful properties would be those able to enhance him or help him fight.

“Damn it! Just forget about it! I better think of how to upgrade my Determination.” Luo Yuan threw away his cigarette and enjoyed his rest, closing his eyes and rocking the deck chair.

The lizard immediately stood up when it saw Luo Yuan fall asleep. It began to wander around the place carefully and run around happily. Not getting any response from Luo Yuan, it started running further and roaring, the animals nearby responding to it. Luo Yuan opened his eyes slightly and looked at the lizard’s strange actions. He guessed that it was trying to mark its territory.

The roars lasted for almost half an hour before they stopped. The smaller mutants in the district were in trouble as the starved lizard began to hunt for food. Even though one of its legs was gone, that did not affect its hunting abilities. In ancient times, when a dinosaur got injured on the legs, it could only wait for death. However, that was not the case with those mutants as there were huge differences created by the biological evolution of the living organisms.

Besides, there were only white level animals in the districts, which was two levels lower than the lizard. Most of the weaker mutants had already fallen to the ground when they saw the lizard heading their way. Even if they wanted to escape, they would just simply run without direction and crush into rocks.

The lizard was not fussy about food as it has been starved for quite a while. Basically, it stuffed everything it saw into its mouth, even the poisonous animals. It spent about two hours filling its stomach until its tummy looked like a big ball.

That was the advantage of claiming a territory. Basically, it did not need to worry about food or the risk of food hunting. The self-defense concept of herbivores did not apply to carnivores. A pride of lions only hunted on their specific territory. If another male lion happened to pass by, then it had to expect a battle and get ready for it.

The giant lizard was so bloated, its wound had cracked open again. Blood was dripping down from the wound but the lizard did not seem to care. It lay down in the bushes near the villa and began to snore. Both the beast and its master relaxed till the evening. Luo Yuan had not managed to figure out anything, even though he had spent the whole afternoon thinking about it. Determination was the evolution of spirit, so it would be useless if he used the wrong method.

Later that night, Luo Yuan told the girls about his concern. He actually thought Huang Jiahui would not have any good ideas, but he was wrong. She easily solved his problem by saying, "It's easy,

just do something you're not willing to do. For example, quit smoking!"

She was actually joking, she did not think Luo Yuan would really do that. She knew quitting smoking was really tough for men as her father still had not managed to quit, even though her mother had been arguing with him about it for more than 10 years.

Luo Yuan nodded seriously, surprising her. He said, "Anything else?"

"Take a cold shower during winter!" Wang Shishi joined their conversation.

"Not a good idea," Luo Yuan said. A cold shower was not challenging enough, and therefore could not train his Determination. Besides, winter those days was a lot like summer.

"Give up alcohol?" Wang Shishi asked.

"Have you ever even seen me drink?" Luo Yuan laughed.

"No. Oh! How about quitting sex?" Wang Shishi suddenly said.

The room became silent. Luo Yuan felt Huang Jiahui secretly pinch his arm and quickly said, "That's a necessity, next!"

"Watch a horror movie in the dark!" Wang Shishi said excitedly.

She liked to watch horror movies, but she always covered her eyes until the end of the movie once she heard a weird sound.

“Fear!” Luo Yuan whispered to himself, feeling inspired. Wang Shishi had unknowingly given him a hint. Determination was the action or ability to overcome fear, to do something one was not willing or brave enough to do. Fighting one’s fears could upgrade Determination faster than quitting smoking which would take a long period of time.

“What’s wrong? You’re acting a bit strange,” Huang Jiahui said doubtfully. She thought Luo Yuan was acting weird, which made her feel insecure.

“I’m fine, don’t think too much.” Luo Yuan thought it would be good for both of them to understand the importance of Determination so he said, “I just realized that Determination is something magical. It can help make things come true.”

Luo Yuan looked at the confused expression on Huang Jiahui’s face and said jokingly, “For example, if I want the room to be bright, there will be light!”

“You ain’t God, stop joking and go to sleep.” Huang Jiahui could not take it anymore.

“Brother Luo is going to be God!” Wang Shishi shouted, kicking the blanket on the bed.

“Fine, but don’t be shocked later.” Luo Yuan was a little mad. He took a deep breath and calmed himself instantly. Then he focused his attention and released a volume of energy strong enough to move all the objects in the room.

Huang Jiahui and Wang Shishi were stunned. They could not believe what they were seeing.

They heard Luo Yuan talking loudly to his energy.

“I said, I want light!”

The last word was still lingering in the air when a bright light appeared in the dark and slowly lightened up every single corner of the room. It looked as bright as during daytime.

Huang Jiahui and Wang Shishi found it unbelievable. The scene felt similar to the arrival of God. The brightness lasted for about 30 seconds until Luo Yuan had consumed half his Determination. Then it slowly became darker until it eventually faded away.

The room was silent. After a while, Huang Jiahui asked, “It was some kind of magic trick, right? Where are the props?”

“Brother Luo, was it just magic?” Wang Shishi had thought it was real and felt slightly disappointed.

Luo Yuan had been shocked by his power as well. He had not expected the light to appear. Although it had only lasted for 30

seconds and had not damaged anything in the room, it had amazed him more than the time he had seen the Zhanmadao shine.

“Let me check it out and find the props.” Wang Shishi thought he had admitted to it being a trick as he had not said anything to contradict them. She took his phone to use the flashlight and jumped down from the bed to search.

“Shishi, you don’t need to search, you won’t find anything. It was the power of Determination!” Luo Yuan stopped her as he recovered from the shock. Then he stretched out his finger and drew in the air. There was a small light on his fingertip, getting brighter and brighter until it formed a ball of light.

Huang Jiahui extended her hand idly and tried to touch the light unconsciously, as if she wanted to feel it. “How come I can’t feel the warmth?”

“Oh, you want some heat? That can be arranged.” Luo Yuan said, doing his best to maintain the calmness inside his soul.

She had just finished her words when she felt the light heat up. The temperature rose rapidly until flames appeared on the surface of the light ball. Even though she did not have any direct contact, she could still feel the heat. What amazed her was that Luo Yuan was not affected by it at all. He still looked perfectly calm. Huang Jiahui did not notice the thin layer of Determination preventing the heat from hurting her.

Chapter 105: Early War

Wang Shishi dropped the phone on the floor. She hesitated before she said, “Brother Luo, are... are you immortal?”

“What do you mean by immortal? Have you met anyone who is immortal?” Luo Yuan asked curiously. He thought Wang Shishi might have seen someone with that kind of power.

Although he seemed to be able to focus his Determination on his body and gather his energy on his sword without any intensive training, he knew that that was actually because of the assistance of the system, which had implanted some memories and experience inside him. It was only a matter of time before he could fully master it, considering he already had the memories in his mind. A combat player would be a very good example of that. Even if a player fell sick for a long time and became very weak, they could get back into shape when they recovered, as long as they had not suffered any memory loss.

Wang Shishi acted like Luo Yuan was an alien. She twitched her lips and said, “How could you not know about the immortals? Have you never read an online novel before? There are several types of immortals. They practice to use their energy, strengthen their fundamental skills, and gather all their energy and upgrade it. They also... They live forever. They can visit both heaven and hell, and kill anybody in just the blink of an eye.”

She was waving her hands bossily while she talked. Luo Yuan was stunned and did not know how to reply. Apparently, Wang Shishi did not want to let it go as she kept looking at Luo Yuan and

asking, “Brother Luo, are you really an immortal? Could you help me try to join you?”

Luo Yuan was stunned. He wondered whether she had studied so much that she could no longer differentiate between reality and fairy tales. He was about to explain, but suddenly he changed his mind and said, “Wait! Shishi, could you try your power? Try to lift the vase in the corner!”

The vase which had been made during the time between the Ming and Qing Dynasty was about a child’s height and around 10kg in weight. It was an invaluable antique during peaceful times, but it was worth nothing now. It had to be worth less than a bottle of water. Wang Shishi was confused, but she followed his instructions. She tried to focus her attention. She could handle it very well. She had never stopped practicing. The vase floated into the air silently after a few seconds.

“Now use your concentration to break the vase!” Luo Yuan said.

Wang Shishi was trying not to get distracted. She just nodded. She had never thought of using her concentration that way. She looked at the vase for a long time, and it began to shake vigorously. Although the ceramic looked fragile, it was actually quite hard to break. Even a young adult could not break it with their bare hands. It was definitely tough for Wang Shishi’s limited concentration power.

No matter how hard she tried, she could not break it. Wang Shishi clenched her fists tightly while her face turned bright red. Her eyes were as big as the eyes of a goldfish. She was staring at the

vase in the air like it was the man who had killed her family.

“Could she accidentally hurt herself?” Huang Jiahui looked worried as she saw Wang Shishi trying her best.

Luo Yuan waved at Huang Jiahui, signaling her not to distract Wang Shishi. Her eyes were getting shinier. The best way to gather the power of concentration was to accumulate emotions of hatred and anger. Wang Shishi had discovered it all by herself. Her face seemed to be bleeding and she was biting on her cheeks to endure the pain, but she did not see any sign of the vase breaking.

Just as Luo Yuan was about to tell her to stop, the vase produced a cracking sound. Both of them noticed several cracks on the surface of the vase, which only increased in number, until suddenly the vase exploded. Pieces of ceramic fell on the thick carpet. Luo Yuan noticed that all the broken pieces were the same size. Apparently, the way Wang Shishi applied her concentration power was very balanced. He was amazed by that. This power was beyond Wang Shishi's limits. It was almost powerful enough to break an 100 kg object.

Luo Yuan took a deep breath. If Wang Shishi could master this power properly, she could even defeat him, considering he weighed only around 80 kg. It would not even be a tough battle as she could easily lift him up into the air. His physique would be useless against her concentration power. In some ways, it seemed to be quite easy to gather the power of Determination, but he did not actually feel that Wang Shishi was talented enough to achieve that. Was Determination perhaps similar to the power of concentration? Or was it just related to it?

Wang Shishi was spinning before she slumped down on the carpet. She seemed to be dizzy. After a while, she asked excitedly, "Master, do I have what it takes to be an immortal?"

Luo Yuan kept shaking his head while he laughed.

Wang Shishi looked disappointed as she said, "Brother Luo, wasn't it a test?"

"You think too much. I've told you, that's the effect of Determination," Luo Yuan said, "Didn't you notice that your Determination enhanced your power?"

Wang Shishi seemed to recall something as she said uncertainly, "I think so. Sometimes I can move heavier objects when I stare at them longer or when I'm feeling furious. Is that considered Determination?"

"It's not that simple. You're still new, but you could try to meditate to overcome your desires," Luo Yuan advised her.

"Do you mean like yoga? I've registered for a yoga class before. I heard that some Indians could even float in the air once they reached a certain level of yoga." Wang Shishi said excitedly.

Luo Yuan had heard about it before as well and had also seen it on Baidu. However, he was not sure whether the images had been edited by photoshop, or it had been some kind of magic trick.

Anyway, he did not believe it. Just as he was about to tell her that those rumors were fake, he recalled the mysterious power of Determination. He suddenly felt uncertain. It was actually possible to achieve such a thing if someone had a very strong Determination. It could even be an easy task for Wang Shishi if she was willing to practice with discipline.

He encouraged her by saying, “As long as you can master focusing your Determination, you can also fly at a lower altitude, not just float in the air.”

Wang Shishi was so excited, she could not wait to start meditating.

Huang Jiahui felt awkward and depressed listening to their conversation. She could not join their discussion every time they talked about superpowers. She felt left out.

“When can I be one of them, an evolutionary survivor?” she thought excitedly as she grabbed her blanket tight.

Luo Yuan noticed that something was wrong with Huang Jiahui. He knew what she was thinking, so he told her, “Actually, you can do it as well. Everyone can focus their Determination, but normal people usually need more time to master it. Your Determination is stronger than Wang Shishi’s, though. You could do what I did just now once you focus your concentration power.”

It was obvious that this was meant to comfort her. If it was that easy, there would have been more people with superpowers. There

had been no such reports, though.

However, Huang Jiahui was still tempted to try, and she sought advice from Wang Shishi about meditation. The two of them kept talking excitedly before they began to conduct some experiments. They stayed up the whole night, only stopping when Luo Yuan suggested to sleep in another room. The next morning, Luo Yuan walked towards the bushes where the lizard had slept the previous night.

The lizard sensed the movement and immediately opened its eyes. It quickly got up from the ground when it realized that Luo Yuan was standing beside it. Luo Yuan was shocked to find a huge change in the physical condition of the lizard. The wound on its chest was healing and the scars on its body were fading. Its injured leg was recovering as well, but he was not as sure about that.

He quickly switched on the status panel and realized that the lizard had gone from a severely injured state to a weak state in only one night. Hence, it would be possible for its leg to recover after only a few days. He was really amazed by its recovery speed. The 17-point Physique of the lizard was really scary. It seemed that most of its wounds would heal as long as it did not die right away.

Leg injury aside, Luo Yuan found that the lizard looked well compared to the previous day, when he had just met it. Initially, he had been worried about whether the lizard would attack Huang Jiahui and the rest of them. Now, that seemed like an unnecessary worry. He quickly jumped on its back and tapped it hard to order it, “Go!”

The lizard finally remembered some signs and instructions after going through some ‘intensive training’ with Luo Yuan the previous day. It moved naturally forward, obeying his order. There had been many mutants around the area when the lizard had marked its territory, thus he did not have to worry about searching for them.

Besides wanting to make up for his loss, Luo Yuan also wanted to use his Determination as an experiment. The lizard had grown smarter. After taking a few wrong turns, it now knew where its master wanted to go.

However, it only walked for a minute before it began to feel frustrated. They suddenly heard a high-pitch sound that sounded like a warning. The fights over territory were always cruel. The lizard would have escaped last time, but now it was walking forward forcefully after being frightened by Luo Yuan. It moved at a very slow pace, though. A rumbling sound came from far away. It sounded like a giant beast was rushing towards them.

Luo Yuan jumped down from the lizard and checked their surroundings. He realized they were on the commercial street near his district. There used to be many small shops there before, but now almost all the buildings had collapsed. He chose a building that looked well-maintained and cut off the grill. He went up to its third floor and hid near a window.

"Beep!" The system sent him a mission again. He had already gotten used to their frequency.

“E Level Mission, Kill a Giant Hedgehog. Duration: Three days.

Accept/Decline?”

Luo Yuan accepted it silently. He took a deep breath and gathered all his energy as he waited for the beast. The lizard looked towards the direction where Luo Yuan had run, and then slowly stepped back. It did not intend to fight at all. The street was damaged once again when the beast rushed there. Luo Yuan peeped from the building and quickly returned to his hiding place to avoid being spotted by the beast. The beast though was too busy to bother with Luo Yuan. It only cared about the lizard that had entered its territory. It roared angrily at it.

It was a black beast with a fat body and a small head. Its scalp was gone and had been replaced by something that looked like thorns. There were many intersected iron teeth inside its mouth and two white fangs outside it. Saliva was dripping down from its mouth. It had a pair of blue eyes and looked terribly disgusting. The worst thing was its fur though, which looked like a bunch of lances vertically projecting out of its body. When Luo Yuan related it to the name provided by the system, he realized that the beast's fur was not for display purposes only.

Chapter 106: The Homeless Man

The lizard roared back at the beast so loud, Luo Yuan could feel the vibrations. Both beasts roared at each other for a while before they began to fight. The lizard was not in optimum fighting condition as its leg was still wounded. It was turned upside down as the hedgehog bit down on its neck until it drew blood.

Luo Yuan knew that this was not a serious injury. The neck of lizard was covered by numerous scales, so although it bled, it was only a small wound.

The lizard roared louder as it kept struggling. It scratched the concrete ground and got up to fight back. Many of the buildings nearby had collapsed during the battle. Even the building Luo Yuan was hiding inside had almost collapsed.

Luo Yuan wanted to jump down from the window to stop them when he saw them coming closer to his building. Suddenly, he sensed someone opening the door quietly with a kitchen knife and rush towards him.

“Fuck you!”

He almost killed him, but he tried to hold himself back. He turned around and kicked the man on the chest. The man flew away and landed on the floor, holding onto the kitchen knife. Luo Yuan felt strange. It had been like kicking a rubber tire instead of a human body. Besides, the power he had used to kick the man had been enough to move a 200 kg object. Any normal person would

had been severely injured by now, but he was not. The man got up in a second.

That was definitely not a normal human. He looked terrible with his messy hair, dirty face and torn clothes. He probably had not bathed for a couple weeks judging by his awful, disgusting smell. Actually, Luo Yuan thought that there were homeless people that looked nicer than this man.

The man got up, looked at Luo Yuan angrily, and said, “You guys are too much! Why the hell did you bring the mutants here and destroy my house? I’d rather die than join you!”

Luo Yuan was miserable, but he did not really care about what the man had said. “You’ve misunderstood.”

“I know you brought those beasts here. Are you a psycho? You really are too much! All this just because you want me to join your organization? Don’t mess with my house, let’s just fight!” the man kept cursing. He did not seem to believe Luo Yuan.

Luo Yuan looked out the window anxiously and saw that the beasts had already gone away. He had lost his chance to attack. He got frustrated and said, “I’m too busy to explain, and you really think too much!”

Luo Yuan rushed across the room and kicked the door down.

The man had not paid enough attention and Luo Yuan had

damaged his house. He got mad and rushed toward Luo Yuan with the kitchen knife. He was about to kill Luo Yuan, but when he reached the door, he was shocked. There was a big hole on the wall, but Luo Yuan was gone.

He was holding onto his kitchen kitchen as he shivered. “I, I’m going to fuck your whole family! I’ll kill you!” he said.

He looked out of the big hole inside his house.

“F*ck you, man! How can you run so fast?” He was watching Luo Yuan run in a certain direction. Then he looked down to the ground. He felt a bit dizzy as he realized he was about two to three floors high. He still jumped down. He was completely mad.

He landed on the ground and then quickly got up again. The beasts were gone, but he could still hear the sound of them fighting in the distance. The street has been damaged once again during the battle.

When Luo Yuan finally found the beasts, he realized that the lizard was close to collapsing. Its neck had been severely injured. He could see a big wound on it as the lizard lay down on the ground and moaned.

It was full of wounds. There were many bleeding holes on its body. It looked like it had been poked by the hedgehog. The hedgehog did not look good either. Its shoulder was torn, one of its legs was bleeding and its tail was broken. However, those would only be minor injuries as long as both mutants managed to stay

alive.

The man was running down the street with his kitchen knife when he finally found Luo Yuan. He whispered to himself, “Damn! I’ve finally found you! You just wait!”

Suddenly, the man blinked. Luo Yuan was gone again. He quickly ran to follow him. He heard the beasts roaring and felt a strong wind carrying an awful smell of blood. The building was shaking and collapsed within a few seconds. The man shivered as he realized he was in big trouble. A beast was jumping around, and he saw someone holding a weird-colored sword slashing at it.

There was blood and flesh all over the place. Internal organs flew out of the beast and dropped on the ground as it walked. In the end, Luo Yuan took a huge leap and aimed his sword at the weak neck of the hedgehog. The beast roared as blood gushed out like a fountain.

Luo Yuan landed back on the ground and sheathed his sword. He knew the man was still following him, but he did not care. He believed the man wouldn't cause him any more trouble now. The headless hedgehog struggled to walk for a while before it finally fell to the ground.

“E-Level Mission, Killing a Hedgehog: Completed!”

“Mission completed in 12 minutes”

“Rating: Good!”

“Identity: Luo Yuan”

“Completion: 70%”

“Reward Basic Experience Value $2,400 \times 70\%$ ”

“Average Evaluation, Experience Value $+1,200 \times 70\%$ ”

“Experience: 3,620/19,200!”

“Battle Beast: Jungle Lizard”

“Completion: 30%”

“Reward Basic Experience Value $2,400 \times 30\%$ ”

“Average Evaluation, Experience Value $+1,200 \times 30\%$ ”

“Experience: 1,080/2,400!”

Luo Yuan looked through the information on the status panel. He had expected his experience value to be distributed to his battle beast. However, things went the other way around and his experience value had increased from 1,600 points to 2,400 points. He was surprised to see that. Luo Yuan was ready to collect the

internal organs when he suddenly saw the lizard roar and struggle to get up. It was moving slowly in a certain direction, which only confused Luo Yuan. He suddenly felt shocked.

The hedgehog had curled up and all the thorns on its back were standing straight. It looked ready to attack. In the blink of an eye, its thorns were released in every direction. Luo Yuan was standing nearby. Suddenly, a flow of information crept into his mind. His head hurt. A thorn flew past his right ear, injuring him, while another one flew towards his chest.

The speed of the thorns was too fast, faster even than bullets. The buffering time was also very short. It was extremely dangerous for him. He quickly pulled out his knife and tried to block the thorns.

“Knife Skill +!”

“Finally, this is the end!”

Luo Yuan checked around the place and realized there were many holes on the ground, some of them really deep ones. The lizard was trying to escape, but it ended up getting poked at several places on its body too. Compared to its earlier injuries though, the thorns were just minor injuries.

The man seemed to have been the most unlucky. He was laying down in a pool of blood, his face pale as a sheet. A thorn had penetrated a building and pierced through his shoulder. Luo Yuan sighed. He had not expected to hurt an innocent person. He would

have put him in a trance if he had known. Suddenly, the man felt the pain and moaned. Then he rushed towards the hedgehog and ate its flesh and blood.

Luo Yuan was confused by the man's behavior. However, in a few minutes time, he saw his wound healing and his flesh grow back. It was shocking.

“F*ck! Is he even human? His recovery power is faster than the lizard's!”

Luo Yuan was actually jealous. He knew he'd have nothing to worry about if he had a recovery power like that. As long as he stayed alive and ate something, he would recover. Suddenly, the man heard the footsteps of the lizard and quickly rolled away and ran. He turned his head back to look at Luo Yuan every once in awhile while he was running. Eventually, he slowed down his speed and hid behind a building to rest.

The lizard struggled to crawl toward the hedgehog, finally slumping down on its dead body. It tried to bite the hedgehog's belly, but it was too weak to pierce its skin. In the end, it just leaned on its chest and licked the blood dripping down from its neck. Luo Yuan sighed as he looked at the lizard. He pulled out his sword and pierced through the hedgehog's belly. He made a big cut, all the internal organs flowing out from the wound. Then he stepped back while the lizard looked at him gratefully.

“Loyalty +1”

Luo Yuan looked at the system message speechless. The lizard had been severely injured and had suffered excessive blood loss, but that did not seem to affect its appetite. After 15 minutes, all the internal organs of the hedgehog were gone, but that was still not enough. Luo Yuan had to cut some more for the lizard. It consumed a total of about 50 kilos of flesh and blood. It only stopped when its belly was as big as a ball. It looked better and was finally able to open its eyes.

Luo Yuan started to cut down the meat and pack it. He had the lizard carry it as it weighed about 500 kg. It was not for the people in the house, but for the lizard itself. It had been very helpful throughout the battle, or at least had provided him with a good shield.

Luo Yuan tapped on its leg and the lizard struggled for a moment, trying very hard to get up. Luo Yuan realized he was being really mean to his battle beast, but he forgot about it the next second.

Chapter 107: Mutual Alliance

“Wait!”

Just as Luo Yuan was about to leave, the man called out to him. Luo Yuan frowned and turned around. “What do you want?” he asked.

The man stared at the lizard, but held his position.

“You... you just destroyed my house!” The man looked awkward, as if he did not know how to continue. Then he said, “What I mean is, I have no place to stay.”

Luo Yuan knew what he meant, and he asked, “You’re not afraid that I’m from the organization?”

The man scratched his muddy scalp and laughed as he said, “They're not nearly as powerful as you.”

Luo Yuan asked curiously, “What is this organization you mentioned earlier? Are there a lot of powerful people in it?”

“It’s some crap called Mutual Alliance. There are some evolved survivors in it, but the majority is still normal people,” the man explained. “They have been giving me a lot of trouble. That’s why I thought you were one of them,” he added.

“If they've invited you, why don't you join them? Surely, It'd better than fighting alone?” Luo Yuan asked.

The man's mouth twitched as he said, “They're the all same. They're hiding like me.”

“Don't try to mess with me, I want the truth.”

The man looked awkward and hesitated for a while. After a moment, he decided to tell him, “Fine! Laugh all you want, but the leader of that stupid alliance slept with my girlfriend!”

He looked agitated as he talked about it.

“It was around the time that the mutation outbreak hit our country. She kept crying and said she wanted to go back to her hometown. In the end, she never returned, and I thought she was dead. I almost committed suicide. I couldn't believe it when I saw her in the arms of another guy a few days ago. Luckily, she could not recognize me anymore. Otherwise, I'm not sure what would I have done. How embarrassing would it be If I accepted their invitation?”

“The smell of blood is too strong, I'm worried it will attract bigger animals. What do you need to bring? Hurry up, we need to go!” Luo Yuan finally allowed him to come with after verifying his background.

“I've got nothing valuable, we can go anytime.” The man relaxed.

He now knew he would not have to worry about finding food and water. He could rely on Luo Yuan's and the lizard's powers.

"Do you want to come up here?" Luo Yuan asked, his mouth twitching. Since the lizard was already carrying so many things on its back, an extra human would make no difference.

The man quickly shook his head. He could not even go near the lizard. "I think I'll just run, I'm kind of used to it." Then he asked, "It's not too far, right?"

"It's not, but are you really fit enough to run?" Luo Yuan looked at his pale face. He doubted the man had any energy left.

"I'm fine. I used to run back when I was in school, this journey is nothing," he laughed.

"Fine." Luo Yuan did not to ask anything else.

He just jumped onto the back of the lizard and tapped on it. The lizard began to move. It was only able to walk slowly, and it formed a long bloodprint along the road as it passed.

The man was fine at the beginning, but he started to feel exhausted after a minute of running.

Although he had a very strong recovery power, he could not have fully recovered in such a short time. He began to feel dizzy and numb.

He did not dare stop though, as he was worried that Luo Yuan would abandon him. He was afraid of being eaten by the other mutants, so he continued to run. After a while, the lizard finally entered the district, and a little later the villa. The man suddenly fell to the ground. He did not have the energy to get up again. Everyone in the villa had already come out of the house.

“Brother Luo, who is this?” Huo Dong asked curiously.

Luo Yuan moved some of the meat off the back of the lizard. It was about 50 kg. He then threw the rest to the lizard. He walked towards the man and looked at him. He laughed when saw the man trying to get up. “I bumped into him along the way. He's probably dehydrated. Someone help him, please.”

Everyone looked at each other, but no one seemed willing to move. In the end, Sun Xiaowu went up to him to help him.

Huang Jiahui brought a bottle of mineral water to him and said, “Drink it.”

He took a few sips, and then put on the lid as he said, “Thanks. Thank you so much. I’m Lin Xiaoji.”

“We are all survivors, we are just trying to help each other. Could you take a shower first? Then we can eat something in about half an hour,” Huang Jiahui said. She just could not stand the dirt.

Although she talked indirectly, the man still understood what she meant. He replied, “Sure! Of course!”

There was a big tank on the rooftop with a lot of water stored inside. Although it was not drinkable, it could be used to bathe or wash clothes. When he came out of the shower, they all realized that Lin Xiaoji was quite young. He admitted that he was a university student. The university had closed since the mutation outbreak, but he had decided to stay in the city. He had not expected that things would be so bad in town.

“You can stay here with us, but we don’t have an empty room. I hope you don’t mind sharing with Huo Dong,” Luo Yuan said. Although there was another empty room, it belonged to Wang Shishi. She would need to return to her room one day. The three of them were staying together, but there were some days when Luo Yuan and Huang Jiahui wanted to be alone.

Although Huo Dong was not happy with the arrangement, he had to agree.

“Also, I need to tell you that everyone here is equal. Please don’t try to show off,” Luo Yuan warned him. He did not know him well enough yet.

Everyone looked at him in shock.

Lin Xiaoji naturally puffed out his chest and said, “I won’t bully them.”

Luo Yuan knew what he was thinking. Almost all evolved survivors acted that way as they felt that it was a special achievement. Sometimes he also had the same feeling, but he was good at hiding it. After a while, Huang Jiahui came out of the kitchen with a big plate of raw meat.

“I’m sure all of you envy those people with superpowers. The key to getting superpowers is actually a well-known secret. Most of you have heard about it already,” Luo Yuan said.

After Huang Jiahui put down the plate, Luo Yuan put a piece of meat into his mouth using a pair of chopsticks and swallowed it. Except for the internal organs, the rest of the meat of tertiary mutants was as hard as cow skin, so he could only swallow it.

He put down his chopsticks and said, “The meat of mutated beasts above secondary level is essential for evolution. This is tertiary mutant meat. That’s all. Help yourselves, please.”

During that chaotic period, even girls were trying to train themselves to be strong. Luo Yuan got up from his chair and walked out of the house. He did not want to watch the disgusting scene of people eating raw meat for the first time. Indeed, many of them vomited, and the whole living room was full of the awful smell. A few minutes later, someone screamed and Huang Jiahui rushed out of the house to call Luo Yuan.

“What’s wrong?” Luo Yuan asked.

“Ning Xiaoran fainted, and her body feels very hot,” Huang

Jiahui replied.

“Let me see.” Luo Yuan was shocked.

He was depressed as he was the one who had eaten the most meat, but he had yet to evolve. Anyway, this was a good thing. It was better to have one more evolved survivor rather than an extra burden.

Chapter 108: Shock

Luo Yuan walked into the living room and saw that Ning Xiaoran had been moved onto the couch. Her entire body was as red as a cooked prawn, which looked quite similar to Wang Shishi's condition when she had evolved.

"Don't get too close to her. Step back a little and be careful," Luo Yuan said. Every single evolution was a gamble. No one knew what kind of superpower they would develop, and he was trying to prevent any unnecessary accidents.

Everyone quickly stepped back with a confused expression. After an hour, Ning Xiaoran was still in a coma. Luo Yuan began to get worried as he remembered that Wang Shishi had not taken such a long time to evolve. He walked up to her and placed his hand on her forehead. He was shocked to discover that her body temperature was extremely high. It was probably around 60-degrees Celsius. That kind of temperature was enough to cook meat.

Luo Yuan sighed and shook his head. Then he said softly, "Her body temperature is a lot higher than normal. She probably won't last long. Get ready to cremate her."

"That's impossible! She was perfectly fine just now!" Cao Lin looked panicked. There were tears in her eyes. The two of them were roommates. She was very close to Ning Xiaoran and she could not believe she was going to die soon.

“Perhaps, there might be a miracle?” Huang Jiahui said, feeling sad. Then she added, “Anyway, we don’t know the evolution process well enough yet. Her case could be different than Wang Shishi's, right?”

“I hope so!” Luo Yuan nodded, putting his hand into his pocket. He realized that he had thrown away all his cigarettes this morning in order to practise his Determination. Huo Dong quickly offered him one, but he declined. Then he turned around and asked Lin Xiaoji, “When did you evolve?”

Lin Xiaoji tried to remember as he said, “It was a few days ago, during the chaos in the central district. I had been starving for days and had begun to feel dizzy. Basically, I ate whatever I could find. I even ate the cotton inside my quilt. Honestly, it was f*cking disgusting, I couldn’t sh*t for days afterwards.”

The women looked at him and frowned.

Lin Xiaoji did not notice their gazes as he continued, “I was quite lucky that day. A mutated beast had been shot by a fighting jet and died right in front of my building. I was going to die soon too, so I went out of the house and brought some meat home. I swallowed it right away. I fell asleep afterward, and was an evolved survivor when I woke up.”

Luo Yuan did not know what to say. He thought Lin Xiaojie had been too lucky.

“Ning Xiaoran’s eyes are moving!” Cao Lin realized Ning

Xiaoran's eyes were moving while Luo Yuan and Lin Xiaoji were talking. She was so surprised, she forgot about Luo Yuan's advice and rushed to her side and held her hand.

Luo Yuan wanted to stop her, but it was too late. Cao Lin was shocked by an electric current as soon as her fingers came into contact with Ning Xiaoran's skin. She immediately stepped back. Luckily, Luo Yuan was there to support her, otherwise, she would have fallen to the floor and gotten embarrassed. The current did not stop, but ran into Luo Yuan's body through Cao Lin's skin. His heartbeat fluctuated for a few seconds and then only slowly went back to normal.

"What kind of power is this? A shockwave? It doesn't seem like it," Luo Yuan thought as he tried to feel and understand the power.

"Are you alright, Cao Lin? Did you get hurt?" the women asked Cao Lin as they saw her shocked expression.

Cao Lin placed her hand on her chest and said with a pained expression, "I'm not sure, I feel like my heart is going to break. It's horrible, I thought I was going to die!"

"Don't worry, let's get you some water. Don't move, let me check if you're injured." Huang Jiahui brought her a chair and gave her a cup of water.

Cao Lin took a few sips and rested for a while. She got slightly better, but she got anxious again when she looked at Ning Xiaoran.

A moment later, Ning Xiaoran slowly opened her eyes. She got up from the couch and asked miserably, “What, what happened to me? Why am I lying down?”

“Congratulations Ning Xiaoran! You have evolved!” Luo Yuan said with a smile as he walked towards her.

Ning Xiaoran was stunned. “I, I’ve evolved?” she said uncertainly.

Luo Yuan nodded. She still could not believe it and she turned to look at the rest of them. She realized their gazes had gotten very different and strange in a such short time. They looked alert, envious, and enthusiastic at the same time. Some of them were trying to keep a distance from her. Even her closest friend was looking at her in alert.

She felt extremely insecure and quickly touched her face and asked, “Do I look ugly now?”

"You're still beautiful. Nothing has changed." People would be scared of her powers after her evolution, but that was a price she would have to pay. Luo Yuan did not explain as much to her. He believed she would understand sooner or later.

Ning Xiaoran looked shy and quickly lowered her chin, avoiding to look at him.

Luo Yuan changed the topic and asked, “Can you control your

power?”

“I don’t know what my power is,” Ning Xiaoran said softly. She was still confused and did not know what her evolved power was.

Luo Yuan took a glass from the table and filled it with some water. Then he said, “Try to hold the glass and increase your strength gradually. Feel the changes inside your body.”

Ning Xiaoran naturally held the glass tightly. She suddenly felt a warm energy circulating inside her body and rush towards the glass. The water inside the glass began to boil and rose up to 30-40 cm in height. Ning Xiaoran got shocked and dropped her hand instinctively, causing the glass to fall.

Luo Yuan was able to catch it in time and hand it back to her. He said patiently, "This is your power. It's like your limbs, you shouldn't be afraid to understand and control it. Try again."

Ning Xiaoran took a deep breath and held the glass in her hand once more.

“Try slowly. Increase the strength gradually and then keep it in check,” Luo Yuan said. Ning Xiaoran’s power was stronger than he had imagined. No matter how strong the mutated beasts could be, their internal organs were weak. She could easily kill them using her power.

The water was boiling again, but much slower this time. It took

about 10 seconds for the boiling to subside.

Luo Yuan nodded and said, “Your power is still weak, you can’t even kill primary level beasts. You should practice more when you have the time. It could help you upgrade your power. Don’t waste your talent.”

Ning Xiaoran kept nodding her head and looking at Luo Yuan, admiring him. He was always so handsome with his fair skin and his power to provide security during such a chaotic period. Innocent girls could not resist him.

Everyone could sense that Luo Yuan was treating Ning Xiaoran differently. Those who had not evolved were not happy as they knew she had been promoted to Wang Shishi and Huang Jiahui's level. If anything happened, Luo Yuan would definitely save her first. She was more useful and valuable now, and they all envied her.

Later in the afternoon, Ning Xiaoran felt like everyone was trying to avoid her. They even refused to accept her help. She was depressed because she felt like she was being isolated by the group. She was not sure whether her evolution had been a gift or a curse.

Luo Yuan noticed and asked to talk to her. He said, “Many people are afraid of people who own a gun, but they are more afraid of a gun in the hands of someone who doesn’t know how to use it. That’s very dangerous, because he or she might hurt someone accidentally. You must learn how to control your power. Look at Wang Shishi. Her mind power is as dangerous as yours, but she had mastered it. That’s why people aren’t as afraid of her as they

are of you. You need to master your power if you want things to go back to normal.”

Ning Xiaoran kept nodding her head, inspired.

“Other than controlling your power, you need to learn how to use it. This place will not be safe forever. We could be in danger anytime soon. You need to learn how to protect yourself. If you want to reach your maximum power, you need to get close to your goal.”

Ning Xiaoran was frightened and she said anxiously, “But... but I've never practiced before.”

“Don't worry, I can teach you.”

Luo Yuan's Free Combat skill was only at 5 points, but it was enough to teach an elementary student like her.

“Alright,” responded Ning Xiaoran, biting her pink lips.

“Let's start with the stance, which is the basic principle of martial arts. It helps strengthen your legs and improve your body stability. If you can't take a stable stance, you will fall easily and your power will be affected. You're a beginner, so let's start with ten minutes today and increase by five minutes every day.”

Stance was very important to people who learned martial arts, and those who had a strong stance were more powerful than those

who did not. Luo Yuan showed her the correct way to take a proper stance. Ning Xiaoran was shy as there was a lot of skin contact between her and Luo Yuan throughout the practice.

“Brother Luo, could you teach me as well?” Lin Xiaoji asked as he watched them from the doorway.

“Come and join us then. Start with the stance practice.”

Huo Dong and the rest were too shy to ask.

Luo Yuan realized this and said, “Let’s all learn together. Please ask Wang Shishi to come as well.”

Although Wang Shishi possessed the power of telekinesis, some physical training would also be beneficial to her as it would help strengthen her Determination. Everyone got excited and Sun Xiaowu quickly fetched Wang Shishi. Everyone had seen Luo Yuan’s power and most importantly his knife skill, which was amazing. Even if they could only manage to learn a little from his skills, it would still be useful.

Chapter 109: Sophomore

Ning Xiaoran began to shake even before Wang Shishi had gotten there. It was obvious that she could not stand it anymore. She was suffering. Luo Yuan looked at his watch and frowned. He had overestimated her physical condition, but he had not expected that she would not even last 30 seconds.

Luo Yuan became very serious and said, "Keep it up, nine more minutes to go!"

Ning Xiaoran looked frightened and her eyes were full of tears. Finally, Wang Shishi arrived. She had heard from Sun Xiaowu about the lessons and she said excitedly, "Brother Luo, I heard that you're teaching us martial arts! Although I'd prefer a sword, a knife is quite cool too. You must teach me until I reach your level!"

Luo Yuan looked at her excited face and said, "You won't be smiling later."

"Ms. Wang, the sword is the weakest among the weapons. During ancient times, people used it as an ornament or a prop during religious ceremonies. It's not powerful enough to kill a mutated beast. The best weapon would be a knife," Lin Xiaoji argued.

Wang Shishi twitched her nose and asked, "Then why did the ancient heroes use swords?"

"Stop believing what you read in novels." Lin Xiaoji could not stand her naivety.

“You... You’re too much!” Wang Shishi was speechless. She felt really annoyed.

“Enough! The discussion is over. Since all of you want to learn, start with the stance. However, both of your physical conditions are better than Ning Xiaoran's, so my expectations will be higher. Twenty minutes for you. If you get up before I tell you to, then please pack your stuff and leave! I don’t train lazy people,” Luo Yuan said emotionlessly. If they lacked the determination, it would be wasteful to feed them during such chaotic times.

Everyone was frightened of Luo Yuan and they suddenly became very serious.

Wang Shishi was not happy with what he had said, and she asked him, “What about me?”

“You?” Luo Yuan looked at her for a second and said, “That applies to you too.”

Wang Shishi pursed her mouth. She had just wanted to know how important she was to him. However, Luo Yuan had been too straightforward and he had hurt her feelings.

“What are you waiting for? Do it now!” Luo Yuan said, glaring at Wang Shishi.

Everyone looked at each other and quickly did the stance

practice. Only Wang Shishi was still left standing there.

“I’m not going to do it!” Wang Shishi said, clearly upset.

"If you're not even willing to put in the effort for the basic training, then how are you going to learn martial arts? Just leave!" Luo Yuan said sarcastically. He felt that he had been too lenient with her last time and that was why she was acting out now.

Wang Shishi was mad. She knew that everyone was judging her behind the back. Her eyes were full of tears as she said, “I, I hate you!”

Suddenly, she ran away with tears rolling down her cheeks. Luo Yuan was very mad, but he did not bother checking on her. He knew she would not run away for long. He expected her to come back soon. He was disappointed as it would be really wasteful for her if she was not willing to discover and strengthen her talents. Since he had upgraded to Level 7, his power had been growing very slowly, but his stress level had risen drastically. Although things were peaceful now, no one knew how long it would last. The stress made him become less patient and get mad easier.

No one dared say anything or even take a deep breath as they noticed Luo Yuan’s furious expression. Ning Xiaoran had reached her limit and her legs were shaking vigorously, sweat rolling down her pale forehead. She was trying to endure as she was also worried about pissing him off. After a minute, Huo Dong could not continue anymore. He was almost 50 years old with a beer belly after all. A moment later, Zhao Gang and Sun Xiaowu quit as well. After another two minutes, Chen Xianfeng and Lin Xiaoji had

reached their limit as well.

Although Lin Xiaoji was an evolved survivor, he was still new to it and he had not managed to maintain a proper energy level due to starvation. Luo Yuan looked at his watch and realized that none of them had lasted three minutes. Their physical condition was too poor and there was a big gap between them and himself, even worse than the gap between him and Huang Jiahui and Wang Shishi. The two of them had eaten quite a lot of good meat from strong mutated beasts and their physical condition was about 10-11 points, which was actually lower than men.

Luo Yuan did not have the interest to continue. He was starting to worry.

“It’s been five minutes. Why hasn’t Wang Shishi come back yet?”

They had gone through many ups and downs since the mutation outbreak, and Huang Jiahui and Wang Shishi had already become his closest family. It was impossible for him to just ignore her. He kept looking at his watch, and his heart was not in it anymore. Had she really run away? What if...? Girls always took jokes too seriously, especially during their puberty. He felt slightly regretful that he'd talked to her that way in front of everyone. He had gotten more frustrated than before.

In the end, Luo Yuan decided to check on her. He was really worried about her. He turned to Chen Xianfeng and said, “Please help me test them. I’m going out for a short while. Let me know who can do what when I get back.”

Chen Xianfeng was the most reliable person among the group and he would be the best person to do the evaluation. He did not say anything, he just nodded instead. Luo Yuan took his knife out and wandered around the district, assuming Wang Shishi would not leave the area. Indeed, a few minutes later, he heard someone crying somewhere in the distance.

Luo Yuan felt relieved as he quickly ran in the direction of the sound. He reached a 7-storey residence building, one of the few buildings that looked safe. He opened the grill and ran up to the fifth floor. The door of Unit 501 was open wide and Wang Shishi was squatting down in the living room, crying. She was crying like nobody was watching. She did not notice Luo Yuan standing there for quite a while.

“Shishi, let’s go home,” Luo Yuan said.

When Wang Shishi heard his voice, she immediately stood up and wiped away her tears. “Why are you here?” she said arrogantly. “Just leave me alone! Didn’t you say you’d kick me out if I couldn’t do the stance for 20 minutes? Well, now I’ve left, so why are you here?”

Luo Yuan sighed, feeling her anger. He walked into the living room, wiped away the dust on the couch and sat down.

Wang Shishi was still crying. She was so mad at Luo Yuan for walking into the house and sitting down like he owned the place. She pulled him up and said, “This is my house now! You’re not

welcome here! Please leave!”

“I can’t even sit down for a while?” Luo Yuan said.

“No! Get up now, get up!” Wang Shishi kept dragging his arm, but soon she got exhausted.

She got even madder and said, “You always bully me and scold me in front of everyone! I hate you! I hate you! You want to kick me out? Sure! I’ll leave! I’m not coming back anymore!” she started crying again as she recalled the pain and insult.

Luo Yuan sighed as he looked at her sad, crying face. He asked, “What do you want me to do so you will return home with me?”

“Apologize!” Wang Shishi said as she turned around.

Luo Yuan compromised and said, “Fine. I shouldn’t have scolded you. I will not scold you in front of everyone ever again.”

“You think it’s that easy?” Wang Shishi said, raising her chin arrogantly.

“I’ve already apologized, what else do you want from me?” Luo Yuan said.

“I, I want you to kiss me,” Wang Shishi said softly.

“No way!” Luo Yuan said, rejecting her directly. “How could you even think of that? You’re still so young.”

“I’m not! I can do whatever Sister Huang can do.” Wang Shishi grabbed his hand and placed it on her boobs with blushing cheeks.

Luo Yuan felt his hand boiling and quickly pulled it back. “But... but you’re not even 14 yet! How could you?”

Luo Yuan did not know how to respond. Wang Shishi raised her chin slightly and said, “It’s March now, I’m already 14. I really don’t know whether I’ll survive till adolescence. I just want to know what kissing feels like.”

Wang Shishi closed her eyes and raised her chin, taking rapid, shallow breaths. Luo Yuan was attracted to her juicy lips, smooth skin and pretty features. His heart was pumping faster than usual, but he was still rational enough to control his urges and say, “No.”

Just as he was about to say something, Wang Shishi stopped him by pushing her lips against his and squeezing her tongue into his mouth. Luo Yuan's eyes opened wide in shock. He could not believe it. He was confused and he wasn't sure whether he should push her away. Her lips were soft and sweet, and her tongue was like a little fish trying to escape. Wang Shishi leaned on his body helplessly, her smooth breasts pressing against his chest. Luo Yuan could feel her full, round breasts.

They embraced each other until Wang Shishi could not breathe properly anymore. Her lips had become juicier because of the kiss,

which made Luo Yuan lose his mind. Wang Shishi lowered her chin, blushing.

“Am I... am I a bad girl?” she asked anxiously.

“No, you’re an innocent girl,” Luo Yuan comforted her.

“Can we still stay together like this?” Wang Shishi said with open eyes as she raised her head. That was enough to satisfy a young girl.

“Yes.” Luo Yuan sighed. He needed to take responsibility after making certain mistakes.

Wang Shishi was very happy. She looked like she had just taken a sip of honey water upon hearing his answer.

Chapter 110: Downsizing

Half an hour later, Wang Shishi was finally willing to go back home. She was leaning on his arm all along the journey with a sweet smile on her face. She had given her heart to Luo Yuan and she wished they would never be separated. However, as they got closer to the villa, Wang Shishi started feeling nervous and guilty. She finally let go of his arm. Luo Yuan was relieved. He had not been able to come up with a way to explain this to Huang Jiahui.

The two of them had not exactly been in love. They were more like sex partners, but they had gotten used to each other's company after going through so many ups and downs together. He did not want to hurt her feelings if he could help it. Things had happened too fast, and Luo Yuan had not had enough time to get prepared. It was an exciting experience to enjoy the obsessive love of a young girl, but it was also a huge headache.

“Let's see what we can do,” Luo Yuan thought with a sigh.

Suddenly, he heard someone in the villa scream and a woman cry.

“What's going on inside? Is it...?” Luo Yuan asked Wang Shishi with a worried expression. “There's something wrong. I'm going to check first, you take care of yourself.”

Wang Shishi had also heard the scream. Although she wished that Luo Yuan would stay with her longer, she did not ask him to. She said, “Brother Luo, go quickly. I'll be fine.”

Luo Yuan nodded. It couldn't be that big of a problem or the lizard would have sent him a warning. He quickly rushed to the villa and found everyone gathered at the empty space in front of the house. Zhao Gang was rolling around on the floor, screaming. Jin Meili was crying in Huang Jiahui's arms.

Luo Yuan rushed to them and asked what had happened to Zhao Gang.

"We have no idea. We were resting by the entrance after training, and suddenly he said he had a stomachache. Then he fell on the floor and started rolling around non-stop," Huo Dong quickly explained.

Zhao Gang's face was twitching and pale, sweat dripping down his forehead. He looked like he was in severe pain, and blood had begun to flow out of his nose and mouth. It was obvious he would not last for long. Everyone kept shouting and stepping back.

"Let me go! Let go!" Jin Meili looked very pale. She kept struggling in Huang Jiahui's arms, but she was too weak to get free.

She seemed to have lost her mind and started to curse Luo Yuan, "You! You killed him! You forced him to train! Otherwise, he wouldn't be like this! All of you! None of you are willing to save him! You will never lead a good life!"

Luo Yuan did not respond. He did not want to seem harsh. He

knew they were a loving couple. She had almost collapsed just watching her husband suffer from pain. However, that did not mean that other people would not be harsh with her either. Cao Lin suddenly rushed up to Jin Meili and slapped her. “Shut up!” she shouted at her.

“How dare you!” Jin Meili was stunned. She covered her face and tried to scratch Cao Lin, but Cao Lin avoided her successfully.

“So what? All of them were doing the same training, but none of the others are feeling sick! It was an accident. Please control yourself. We owe you nothing!” Cao Lin said.

“Both of you shut up!” Luo Yuan shouted.

Cao Lin was clearly upset, but she did not speak another word. Jin Meili looked like she wanted to say something, but she did not dare talk either. She had come back to her senses after being slapped by Cao Lin. Luo Yuan walked towards Zhao Gang and realized he was getting weaker. He had stopped struggling. His breathing was weak and he sounded like something had been stuck in his throat. Blood kept coming out of his nose and mouth. He was going to die soon.

Jin Meili began to cry again while she watched him. Luo Yuan carefully flipped his body over with his knife instead of his hands. He wanted to see whether there was any wound. Zhao Gang did not seem to have been bitten or stung by mutants. His blood was the usual red.

Luo Yuan asked everyone doubtfully, “What did he eat just now?”

“Not sure. He was with us all the while. He did not eat anything besides lunch. Oh, he did drink water after the training,” Huo Dong said.

“Water? What kind of water?” Luo Yuan asked.

“Mineral water,” Huo Dong said.

Everyone ate the same food and the mineral water was vacuum sealed, thus it should not have been a contributing factor. Luo Yuan got up from the ground and checked their surroundings once again, but he did not find anything strange. He glanced across the water bottles on the floor and realized there was a bottle of a different brand. He immediately felt suspicious. Although he had been collecting different brands of mineral water, it was strange that this was the only different brand among the lot.

“Whose water bottle is that?”

“Zhao Gang’s,” said Sun Xiaowu.

Everyone had their own water. Most of the mineral water in the district have been collected by them during the past few days. There had been a total of about 50 cartons of mineral water from different brands. Huang Jiahui distributed one to each person every morning.

“Jiahui, did you distribute the same carton of water today?” Luo Yuan asked.

Huang Jiahui looked confused as well. “I’ve been distributing the Farmer's brand mineral water for the past few days. I'm not familiar with this brand.”

He suddenly recalled something and quickly looked at the water bottle. “Indeed!” He was shocked.

He could see many semi-transparent worms swimming in the water. The worms were tiny and their color was similar to the water, which made it difficult to notice them. He also discovered a tiny hole on the bottle cap which looked very familiar to him. Lin Xiaoji took the water bottle from Luo Yuan and looked at the water. He immediately dropped the bottle and stepped back. “Why are there worms inside?” he asked.

A few of them walked closer to check it out and then quickly stepped back. Jin Meili looked shocked. She was idling and shivering at the same time. Luo Yuan asked in a very serious tone, “Jin Meili, where did this water bottle come from?”

“I, I picked it up,” she replied.

“Where did you pick it up?”

“It, it was the night I was sleepwalking!” Jin Meili kept crying

from the guilt. “I didn’t know there were worms inside it. I wouldn’t have taken it if I knew. I didn’t know it would kill him!” Jin Meili looked very regretful.

Luo Yuan sighed as he watched her cry. He had not expected the water bottle she had brought back to kill anyone. Fortunately, everyone had their own water bottles. Suddenly, Zhao Gang’s body shook once and he farted very loudly. His pants were wet and an awful smell came from his body. His eyes were wide open and staring at the sky. His body shook, but there was no sign of breathing anymore. Wang Shishi covered her mouth in shock as she watched the scene.

Luo Yuan felt depressed. He could not believe that someone he had just talked a while ago was dead. He remained silent for a while before he said, “Sun Xiaowu, you guys go get some firewood for the cremation. We can’t keep the dead body for long.”

The parasite worms would come out of the dead host body to look for a new host. It would be too late if they hadn’t burnt the body by that time. Jin Meili was crying and trying to stop them, but no one bothered with her. In order to prevent the haunted tree from growing, Luo Yuan had had to chop most of the trees in the district and cut them into firewood.

“Go see him one last time,” Luo Yuan said to Jin Meili.

Jin Meili looked at her husband and cried out loudly.

“Take him away,” Luo Yuan told everyone after waiting a while.

Other than Luo Yuan, there were four men at the scene. Lin Xiaoji was very arrogant, and he did not move. Huo Dong looked at Sun Xiaowu and Chen Xianfeng anxiously. Suddenly, Chen Xianfeng got a cloth and wrapped up the legs of the corpse. Huo Dong followed.

Sun Xiaowu wanted to go initially, but he did not as he was afraid of both the worms and the corpse. Huo Dong and Chen Xianfeng moved the corpse onto the firewood. The burning flames swallowed it in just a few minutes. Everyone remained silent and stood far away while they watched. Jin Meili was still crying from the guilt.

Chapter 111: Crisis

“It was me! I’m the murderer! I killed him!” Jin Meili gushed frantically in a state of panic. She would have collapsed to the ground, if not for Huang Jiahui’s firm grip onto her. Luo Yuan turned around and said to Jin Meili, “My deepest condolences.”

Jin Meili shook her head slowly with regret. In despair, Luo Yuan came to realize how fragile a life could be, that even a tiny creature could rob the life of a human being.

Luo Yuan and the rest decided to check on all the foods and drinks in the underground chamber for fear of any imminent danger. They were shocked as some of their provisions were torn, with worms squirming amongst their instant noodles and rice. Luo Yuan even found a few colorful worms, which were about half a meter long.

All those resources were collected from the wasteland, which they have brought to the chamber without so much as a thorough check. He was grateful it wasn’t too late. Most importantly, only one person drank the water and none of them had consumed the contaminated food. Otherwise, he would not have survived this at all, even with his 13-point physical condition. Luo Yuan and his people discarded all the infected food from the chamber and burned it in front of the villa.

Only a third of the food in the chamber was burned, as Luo Yuan did not want to take the risk. Of course, he could very well identify how safe the food was with the power he had, but it drained a significant amount of energy, and a very bad headache could very

well follow, should he exert his mind too often.

Jin Meili locked herself in the room the whole day, refusing to even come out even when it was already time for dinner. Huang Jiahui knocked on her door but there was no response. Suddenly, Luo Yuan caught a whiff of the smell of blood in the house and instantly knew something was amiss. He quickly turned the doorknob but realized it was locked from the inside.

“Is she...?” Huang Jiahui said worryingly. She kept knocking the door, “Jin Meili, open the door! Open the door, please!”

“Stop knocking. Give me some space.” He knew the stench of the blood came from the room.

Everyone else at the dinner table also had an uncanny feeling about the situation at present. Luo Yuan kicked the door open, to be greeted by the pungent stench of blood. Huang Jiahui quickly ran into the room. She did not see anyone inside and immediately ran into the bathroom to have a look. She saw Jin Meili motionless in the bathtub with a pale face; her shirt soaked with blood.

Huang Jiahui touched her forehead and realized her body was cold and stiff. She shook her head and said, “She passed away two hours ago. Sigh...”

That was the second time Luo Yuan witnessed a suicide. The first one was the middle-aged man who had lost their son to the deadly tramples of a giant beast. He had seen many people losing their lives in different ways, but a suicide was the worst one of all.

Everyone looked around for her will; it was wet and crumpled. In the will, Jin Meili apologized sincerely for her rudeness and requested them to sprinkle her ashes with Zhao Gang's.

Everyone was consumed with sorrow; Ning Xiaoran and Wang Shishi had also burst into tears. A few of the ladies wept in unison, as they did not expect such a tragedy to happen. None of them had any appetite left for dinner. A few of them moved her corpse to the empty space and lit up the fire again. None of them could have imagined that they would lose two members in just a short span of a day.

During bedtime, Wang Shishi asked to return to her room. Huang Jiahui was surprised, while Luo Yuan understood. Luo Yuan felt relieved and Huang Jiahui was elated.

“What do you think of her decision? Did you tell her anything?” Huang Jiahui recalled Wang Shishi's odd actions and asked, in doubt.

“I didn't say much; she is a smart girl. I simply explained it to her and she understood well.” Luo Yuan replied.

Huang Jiahui hit him; her face flushed with anger, “How could you say such things to her? She's still young!”

“Young? Kids nowadays are much smarter than we are,” Luo Yuan said.

“Regardless, you shouldn’t have even said that! How am I going to face her now?” said Huang Jiahui furiously, while throwing a punch at him.

“Just forget it. It will pass” Luo Yuan replied.

“Fine, I’m not going to talk about it anymore.” She was still fuming with anger. At that very moment, she suddenly thought of Zhao Gang and Jin Meili, and sighed, “Life is too fragile, you would never know what lies ahead of us. I really didn’t expect her to take her own life”.

“It might be a relief for all the pain she was going through. Let’s sleep, shall we?” Luo Yuan said.

Luo Yuan opened his eyes in the dark and listened to the roars outside. Thoughts ran through his mind, “I must stay alive!”.

The chameleon’s recovery progressed impressively after consuming the meat of the dark blue level mutated beast. Half of his injuries recovered overnight. Luo Yuan had stopped abusing the chameleon, and trained it every day instead. The second day, the injured leg of the chameleon had fully recovered and it became more energetic as the days went by. They had won a few battles, but those were the ones that mattered the most. The chameleon had been upgraded by two more levels but Luo Yuan was only at the brink of being upgraded. He added the extra two points to its dexterity to become 14 points.

Although only two points were added, it gave the chameleon

double the power. Luo Yuan assigned the 10 technique points to its tail and bite, to a now 19-point biting and a tail attack that was upgraded from 15 points to 'Tail Attack Expertise: 0!'.

His assignment strategy had turned the chameleon a very powerful, deadly creature. Its tail could slice a human or animal into two! They had encountered a dark blue level mutated beast before and it was slashed into two pieces even before it managed to struggle away. If Luo Yuan ran into a chameleon like this a while ago, he knew in a second that he would have not come out alive. Luo Yuan had been on a killing streak of all the giant and powerful beasts nearby, and there were only a few super powerful beasts left, that he was hesitant to strike.

The battles over the last few days had brought them to the point of exhaustion. The chameleon sustained some injuries and needed more time to recover in order to take on another good fight. He realized both of them were depressed and frustrated for a few days now. They could hear the vicious growls from the dark blue level mutated beasts in the near distance and at that very moment, he could foresee a stronger beast from the city, coming their way. It was too late!

Chapter 112: Indifferent

Huo Dong was awake at the break of dawn and found Luo Yuan sitting outside the house as he opened the main door. Luo Yuan looked very calm with his eyes closed; his clothes were damp from sitting outdoors the whole night. The blade of the Zhanmadao which pierced into the ground, looked rather impressive under the rays of the morning sun.

“What’s wrong?” asked his curious roommate, Sun Xiaowu, who was also up early.

“Brother Luo is practicing outside, we better not disturb him.” Huo Dong said, despite noticing that there something could be wrong.

All the mutated beasts seemed to have eaten an aphrodisiac, as they were roaring and made a cacophony of loud noises over the last few days. Apparently, there were some major changes in the mutated beasts and the way Luo Yuan behaved seemed to prove his speculations right. Initially, Sun Xiaowu wanted to go outside for a breath of fresh air but he dared not, when he knew that Lu Yuan was outside. He was afraid of Luo Yuan and tried his best to avoid him.

“As dedicated and hardworking as Brother Luo is towards his training, it’s no wonder he’s so powerful!” Sun Xiaowu whispered while peeping through the gap.

“I can’t be too sure, you can ask him if you want in on his secret,”

Huo Dong smiled.

“He won’t impart his knowledge unto me... not even if I ask him to” said Sun Xiaowu, trying to conjure excuses as he secretly did not dare to approach Luo Yuan.

“Brother Luo is not that kind of person, in fact, he is teaching us martial arts at present.” explained Huo Dong, fearing to criticize Luo Yuan, lest he overheard.

“Nonsense. All we ever did was to practice the stance over the last few days, nothing else.” Sun Xiaowu whispered.

“We are still learning the basic techniques... there are much more to come later. Besides, Wang Shishi is also learning with us.” Huo Dong was trying to advise him, but deep down, he actually thought that Sun Xiaowu was being too impatient.

“Who knows what she has done for him? They are sleeping on the same bed, after all!” Sun Xiaowu exclaimed with jealousy.

“Shhh! Watch your mouth, it won’t do you any good.” Huo Dong frowned and took a step back.

Sun Xiaowu refused to listen to his advice and shot a glare at Huo Dong before retorting, “I was just joking! Why do you have to be so serious?”

Huo Dong yawned and adjourned to his room. Coincidentally,

Lin Xiaoji came out from his room and yawned as well. He then looked at Sun Xiaowu for a second and then sat down on the couch without so much as a mere acknowledgement.

“What are you actually trying to show off here? You’re just lucky to even have the chance to evolve,” thoughts ran through Sun Xiaowu’s mind when suddenly, Luo Yuan burst his bubble and entered the room, shooting a glare towards his direction.

Gradually, the rest began to emerge from their bedroom.

Lin Xiaoji was trying to challenge Wang Shishi by being sarcastic to her. Unfortunately, he ended up floating in the air and was frightened by Wang Shishi’s shuttle. He then approached Ning Xiaoran as he wanted to know how powerful she was. Initially, Ning Xiaoran rejected his challenge, as she was worried that she might hurt him unintentionally.

In the end, he did claim to have rapid recovery power, which managed to convince Ning Xiaoran to finally agree to unleash her power on him.

Lin Xiaoji did not expect her to have such a tremendous improvement in her skills in such a short period of time. He was flung across the air, some 4-5 meters away. Ning Xiaoran felt very guilty and burst into tears at the mere thought of what she did to him.

Luo Yuan suddenly beckoned Wang Shishi and Huang Jiahui to come into the master room on the second floor.

“You have been acting strange since yesterday and you hadn’t even had a good night’s rest. I thought you told me you could meditate anywhere you wanted to?” said a worried Huang Jiahui, before he pursued the matter, “What’s wrong? Is there something that you can’t even tell us?”

“Brother Luo, what happened?” Wang Shishi asked.

"It's no use even if I did choose to tell you; it's not as easy as you think, this time around. We are all in danger." Luo Yuan sighed.

“What’s wrong!?” exclaimed Huang Jiahui, in a state of panic.

“The mutants are undergoing a new evolution process, as many of the dark blue mutated beasts have been acting extremely wild and vicious as of late. Some of them had even left their territories to kill those blue mutated beasts; one of which is just nearby”.

Huang Jiahui looked pale. She grabbed his arm and asked, “What do you want to do? Please, don’t be reckless. We won’t even be able to satiate him, should they kill us. Can we hide somewhere else for a few days?”

Luo Yuan shook his head and said, “We can’t do that now as we have a war beast with us. It’s too gigantic.”

“Can we let the war beast go?” a tearful Wang Shihi suggested.

“We could escape if we let the war beast go, but the district would still be unsafe. Besides, it is too difficult to get another war beast and it’s an even more ridiculous idea to let it go.”

The atmosphere in the room was tense. With tears in her eyes, Wang Shishi said, “I won’t let you take such a risk! I just want you to be safe!”

Huang Jiahui too, was begging Luo Yuan with teary eyes, “Let’s run away, we could go to the western region... to Tibet, or to the dessert. I’ve heard that they have built a new city there. Can we live a peaceful life there instead?”

Luo Yuan was touched, but he shook his head and said, "It's too late, I can feel the dark blue mutated beast coming closer and closer. Besides, it will be very long journey to the west and we would not know how dangerous it could be. We will definitely incapable of reaching our destination without a powerful team. Just stop persuading, would you? I've made up my mind. I may not even come back safely..."

Huang Jiahui quickly covered his mouth, with tears streaming down her cheeks.

"Don't say anything stupid like that, I won’t know what to do with my life if you don't return."

Wang Shishi could not stop crying. She was still young, and death was definitely something too much for her to handle. She did not even know if she would be brave enough to face it, should

it ever happen. Her world would come crashing down in its entirety, if she ever loses him.

Luo Yuan moved her hand away and held it tight.

“You must stay alive. Wang Shishi, you must remember to kill all of them in the house if I don’t come back, do not pity them. Then, hide in the underground chamber, as the food would be enough for the two of you to survive for another 3-4 years. After that, let’s leave it to fate to decide.

The two ladies had now become his closest family; he will do anything for them to survive. He would have killed all the other people in the house, if he were not hoping for a miracle. Wang Shishi and Huang Jiahui kept nodding their head, while sobbing.

“I want to follow you!” demanded Wang Shishi bravely, as she wiped away her tears.

"I have a gun, I want to go too!" Huang Jiahui said.

“Your power is still at a very weak point, you would be a distraction if you were to come along. Stop trying to reason with me. Stay here and await my return.”

Luo Yuan gazed at them lovingly, before turning around as he walked towards the door. Both of the ladies fell to the ground helplessly upon hearing the door close.

Chapter 113: Horror

Luo Yuan rode atop his giant lizard. After catching a glimpse of the crowd beneath him, he turned his back nonchalantly. He patted the back of his mighty pet and away they went, leaving the district.

The giant lizard was agile, and as quick as lighting. Regardless of its massive size, its pace was nimble and quick. In less than a minute, they were already out of the district.

In just a few days, all the scars on the giant lizard have already healed. The scales that were peeling have also begun its regrowth to a now shiny and vibrant green. Unlike the miserable look it had when they first met, there was no sight of any remaining scars left.

However, compared to its initial gargantuan size, it has somehow shrunk, which could possibly make it appear fragile and weak. Still, only Luo Yuan knew how impressive his giant lizard's combat ability was!

His agility had increased by two points. The higher the agility, the faster the speed. Now, the giant lizard is able to move twice as fast. The very moment its speed was unleashed, it could render even a dark blue level mutated beast shuddering in fear.

Nevertheless, it still wasn't a good idea for Luo Yuan to fight the dark blue level mutated beast. Although his giant lizard was as swift as lightning, the dark blue level mutated beast was still capable of overpowering it. Not only will it dominate in terms of

strength and size, its god-like speed would certainly be a threat, not to mention its ultimate defense skill too. Luo Yuan truly did not stand a chance even with his giant lizard's attack against the dark blue level mutated beast.

Its primary ability is to suppress its enemies, followed by flashes of lightning strikes.

Due to his past, he still could not gather enough courage to take on such a threatening creature. Not even in this wildest imagination, could he ever! On top of the lack of courage, it would still be a near impossible feat to defeat it. So far, Luo Yuan had only met the dark blue level mutated beast twice. The first was a Snake, and the other was a Giant King Kong. Its impressive defense skills could intimidate anyone; sending shivers down their spines.

One would need all the body strength in the world just to slaughter the corpse of a dark blue level mutated beast, let alone a live one. Without an attack skill, it would be pointless to level up.

When weaponry proved futile, the power of one's determination can be a good alternative. Luo Yuan's Will and Sensory Perception both increased when he managed to obtain the heart of Gui Huai. Yet, he still feels that it does not suffice. To take down the defense of the threatening creature, one must use up massive Will. 14 points of Will would stand no chance against a brutal fight like this.

A few days ago, the dark blue level mutated beast began evolving again, to the point of realization of how cruel the world could ever be. The immense pressure is a result of said evolution. Any

creature lagging behind in their evolution will be eliminated, or eventually becoming an inferior part of the food chain, as opposed to the superior ones, who would become stronger and will dominate.

Due to the dog-eat-dog nature of these merciless battles, the world has now become an enormous hunting ground. Should one ever be left behind in the process of evolution, one should expect to end up as another beast's chow.

Will is the self-cultivation of heart, as well as the change of mentality. Thus, after a night's worth of meditation, he managed to raise his Will.

15 points of Will – the highest skillset he possesses, along with his powerful strength was his source of confidence.

Suddenly, the giant lizard suddenly stopped moving. Its tail tightened, and its scales rolled up instantly, forming sharp points. It howled in angst, and stomps its feet repetitively. Luo Yuan then noticed the uncanny, pin-drop silence in the district. It was in total silence, with only so much as a few soft roars coming from the distance.

“This is too abnormal!”

Luo Yuan started to seriously observe his surroundings. However, there was no motion in sight at all.

A gentle breeze swept by. From the top of a nearby dilapidated building, a few shards of broken glass can be heard falling to the ground, shattering upon impact.

Cold sweat trickled down his forehead. He tightened his grip on his knife.

Slowly but surely, his giant lizard started to move backwards. Luo Yuan could feel the muscles of its back tightening. This is more than enough to indicate that the dark blue level mutated beast was close by.

The strange part was, he wasn't able to catch even the slightest notion of its presence. It was only natural that no matter how carefully a huge creature moves, a sound would follow. Oddly enough, no sounds were heard at all.

"It can't be in the sky, can it?!" Luo Yuan glances towards the sky, but there was still nothing in plain sight!

"No, there must be something I missed.", he muttered to himself, laced with confusion. All the stress started to consume him.

Luo Yuan suddenly recalled the corroded earthworm he ran into previously. He could still feel his heart palpitating in fear.

"Oh no, it could be underground!"

Luo Yuan quickly jumped down from the back of his giant lizard.

He immediately felt a slight tremor the very moment his feet touched the ground. All of a sudden, the shaking became more and more vigorous; approximately approaching a magnitude of either 7 or 8 on the Richter scale. All the streets began to crack one by one, forming innumerable bottomless cracks.

Luo Yuan could feel his heart palpitating haphazardly and he could hardly breathe. As he remained rooted to the ground, he started feeling terrified. His body was still trembling even after fleeing four or five meters away. A loud booming noise filled the air followed by an insane amount of rocks breaking their way out from the ground.

Facing a plotted attack like this, Luo Yuan had no way to escape.

Seven or eight concrete rocks slammed onto his back rapidly, signifying the start of a battle. The tremendous force hurled his body towards the air and smashed it onto the wall of the adjacent building. The wall shattered upon impact.

He shook his head and struggled to stand up. At that very moment, he felt as though his body was failing. A funny taste arose at the back of his throat and not long after, blood began to spurt out from his mouth.

He glanced at the pieces of bulletproof suits on the ground, and fear began to creeping up on him. Everything just happened so unexpectedly, that he had no time to concentrate nor accumulate his Will. Had he not have worn the bulletproof suit when he was slammed by the rocks, he would already be found dead with severe injuries.

With no time to check nor dress his wounds and injuries, Luo Yuan quickly shifted his glance onto the street.

The giant lizard has not been swallowed alive. At this critical moment, it stood in the middle of the street and howled in fury. Fear could also be heard lacing its every howl. Most of its scales have been smashed, and stained by fresh blood. It was obviously injured during the explosion of rocks.

A huge hole the size of more than half the street had appeared in the middle of the road. That terrifying mutated beast seemed to have vanished into thin air.

Luo Yuan looked very intense and serious; beads of sweat could be seen trickling down his forehead. Despite sensing the tremor from the ground, he tried to accumulate more of his Will. His flesh began to be protected by a thin layer of Will, which resembles a sheen of light, unseen to the naked eye.

Luo Yuan noticed a small corridor along every floor of the nearby office buildings. The corridor was only adequate for one person to pass through, but he had an idea. Summoning all his strength, he jumped and grabbed onto one of the corridor railings, approximately four meters high. He flipped over and stood on the corridor. He then proceeded to jump up to third floor and stopped at the fourth floor.

He stayed close to the wall while staring at the street intensely.

After a while, the building started to shake vigorously again, and a collapse seemed imminent within mere seconds. Luo Yuan's body began to sink, but his feet remained rooted to the ground. He braced himself by stabilizing his body, holding onto the handle of his weapon.

The pitiful giant lizard paced uneasily and spun round and round, on the spot. As the tremor started to get stronger, it jumped to the side. Suddenly a loud booming noise pierced through the air.

Luo Yuan opened his eyes in horror and stared into the open.

Broken rocks were being hurled across the sky in all directions. Suddenly, a mouth as big as a train coach drilled out from the ground beneath them.

Gigantic, and menacingly sharp & pointed teeth dominated that monstrous mouth. There were about seven or eight rows of teeth made up of hundreds of smaller teeth in each row. It had an uncanny resemblance of a meat grinder. Anything that was in its way would possibly end up as a pile of minced meat.

As the rest of its body was hidden underground, Luo Yuan could not estimate the exact location of the beast. That meat-grinding mouth plus its elusive ability made a great combo that could even force any dark blue level mutated beast to step back in fear.

Luo Yuan hesitated for a second, and the mutated beast drilled back underground once again in preparation for its next round of attack. Luo Yuan could only manage to catch a glimpse of the

mutated beast for a split second.

“If this continues, we wouldn’t even stand a chance!” Luo Yuan felt hopeless. “If we don’t succeed in luring it to come out from the ground, we can only back off at the moment.”

Whilst deep in thoughts, the giant lizard had dodged another attack. However, its abdomen couldn’t escape and sustained injuries after being hit by concrete mud, weighing a few hundred kilograms. It wailed in pain as blood began to flow out, rendering it almost immobile.

Luo Yuan’s heartbeat raced as he witnessed the scene.

The mutated beast that ambushed them from underground kept attacking, relentlessly.

It was getting harder and harder for the giant lizard to dodge, as its body was hit by rocks each time it tried. Every step was staggered, but the giant lizard was smart enough to know where to hide, before the mutated beast drills out from the ground.

The innate ability of the giant lizard is its accurate sense of danger. This attack was proven capable enough to battle a regular mutated beast.

In a short period of time, the streets were destroyed thoroughly. The roads were laden with holes. Some of the holes were so big that they began combine to become even bigger holes that

perforated the street.

The giant lizard that successfully dodged all its attacks finally began to test the patience of the underground mutated beast.

The concrete foundation of the city was damaged beyond measure, with spider-web cracks spreading across the city. A few nearby buildings shook vigorously, and collapsed, resulting in billows of thick smoke, which engulfed the city with dust.

A long, black worm more than ten meters in length drilled out from the ground, breaking through the smoke and dust.

It looked like a gigantic cricket, covered by a black, metal exoskeleton with many feet. These feet came in more than a hundred pairs, and appeared to be short and tiny. Its body was also covered by spiral threads which aids in reducing resistance when it drills the ground; for faster drilling speed.

The atmosphere was still and horrifying, even by its mere presence.

The giant lizard was stunned by its demeanor and backed off. Its stiff body was now trembling with fear. In its haste, it accidentally steps on one of the cracks on the ground and almost fell to its death.

That mutated beast growls and started moving towards the giant lizard swiftly. At this rate, an ordinary human could only see a

quick shadow and the dust that remained. This was made possible by the innumerable feet of the beast that moved in a structured and uniform order, which helped it bolt around stealthily at lightning speed.

It sped like an express train; huge rocks and buildings proved to be neither an obstacle nor barricade, as it collided forcefully into everything that came in its way.

“How frightening!”

The giant lizard could feel that this battle was coming to an end. It finally got over its fear and let out loud growls while swinging its tail in the air. The spins of its tail sped up in rapid movement and formed a blade-like air force. All the nearby buildings were destroyed by the force of the tornado coming from its tail.

“This is the power of a “tail whip”!”

Chapter 114: Strange Condition

“Mission E+: Kill the Thousand-Tentacle Crypt Worm; Time Frame: 3 days! Accept/Decline?”

The mission message was finally there. Luo Yuan hesitated shortly before he pressed the Accept button. Up to that point, there had been nothing he'd had to be afraid of or run away from.

He pulled out his Zhanmadao slowly, took a deep breath and jumped down from the fourth floor.

Something unbelievable happened.

He broke the laws of physics, his body landing on the ground as light as a feather. The second he landed, he stomped on the land and his body vanished from the ground. When he appeared again, he was about five metres away from where he had just landed. He bowed forward a little, and disappeared with rapid footsteps.

The Thousand-Tentacle Crypt Worm rushed all the way towards the giant lizard like nobody's business. It was not scared of the mutant creature. Not in the slightest. It opened its huge mouth and bit the lizard unceremoniously.

The lizard was far from ready for this. It howled loudly and crashed on its side, its body twisting into a big arc.

Its almost four-meter long serrated tail swung across the air,

making an ear-splitting noise.

The Thousands-Tentacle Crypt Worm had no time to react to the lizard's sudden attack. It probably had not expected the giant lizard to fight back at all.

A loud noise could be heard as the lizard whipped its tail to smack the crypt worm on the head. The weight of the tail was impossible to calculate. It made the air inflate and caused an explosive storm.

The lizard's whip of a tail tossed the crypt worm several meters away. The worm kept rolling as it landed on ground. Its snake-shaped body twisted while it rolled. The crust of its head had cracked after it had gotten hit by the tail. Dull red liquid could be seen flowing out.

The fight had stimulated the giant lizard. It had already forgotten about its fear. It quickly rushed toward the crypt worm and bit its neck, its mouth wide open.

Creatures the size of dinosaurs had quite an astonishing bite. Even a dark blue level mutated beast like the Thousand-Tentacle Crypt Worm could not defend itself against that strong attacking skill. It was like the sound of a drill cutting through a steel board. The crypt worm's head had been torn open by the giant lizard's teeth, blood flowing out.

The Thousand-Tentacle Crypt Worm growled angrily, and rolled away scared, trying to escape from the giant lizard.

The worm was shocked and scared as it stared at the lizard with its degenerating blue eyes. It had never expected such a low-level mutated beast to be so tenacious, and yet it was losing the fight.

That painful lesson had taught it to be serious and treat the lizard as an equal rival.

The oppressed atmosphere made it hard to breathe. The giant lizard growled in a low voice as it kept circling around the Thousand-Tentacle Worm. After a few seconds, it could no longer stand the pressure. It leapt, aiming for the wound around the worm's neck.

The Thousand-Tentacles Crypt Worm suddenly opened its big mouth, producing a horrible suction. The sucked-up air formed an air swirl around the area, numerous stones shooting over the worm's mouth. The swirling motion even made several hundred-kilo rocks roll.

The giant lizard weighed over ten tons. Had it not been moving, the suction would not have affected it at all. However, at the time, it had been running fast.

During such an intense fight, even the tiniest mistake could cause death, let alone such a big one.

The giant lizard did not make any attempt to escape as the huge mouth moved towards it. The Thousand-Tentacle Worm's mouth was almost the same size as the giant lizard's body, its strength even more terrifying. If the lizard got bitten, no matter how

indomitable its health, it would die.

The Thousand-Tentacle Crypt Worm had never expected such an obscure creature to get closer.

Luo Yuan pulled out his sword, the blade immediately producing a shiny mist that could be seen clearly under the scorching sun. The sharp blade extended three more inches beyond its tip.

His face was flushing and his eyes bloodshot. Dull green was pulsing in his neck, just like the roots of old trees twisting together. His muscles started to twitch. As he ran rapidly, his body seemed to expand in size.

After a few steps, he stomped heavily. The concrete ground turned into powder within a second. Then Luo Yuan took a leap and chopped the Thousand-Tentacle Worm from head to tail.

The reflection of the light looked a lot like lightning. It went off just as it had appeared.

The worm had been cut by the sharp blade, red blood, flesh and dull green internal organs flowing out. It had almost been cut in half.

The Thousand-Tentacle Worm had not expected to suffer such a bad injury while it pounced toward the giant lizard. It had no time to swallow its prey as it raised its upper body and roared angrily.

Luo Yuan pulled out his knife fast and sneaked into a nearby building, demolishing a wall as he dashed in. For time-saving purposes, he did not even use his sword. He just made a hole using his body.

As gravel and dust fell all around him, they were flicked away by his Will. Luo Yuan had overcome all obstacles by taking that initiative. He could not bear a massive loss of determination at that crucial moment.

The Thousand-Tentacles Worm's hatred had been turned on him. It lifted its body and scanned all around, using its fiery blue eyes, but it could not even locate Luo Yuan's shadow.

The giant lizard started regaining its consciousness. It quickly looked for a chance to attack, but after the lesson it had just gotten, it did not dare bite the crypt worm again. It plotted to use its Tail Whip instead. Even a dark blue level mutated beast could not withstand its phenomenal Tail Whip. Not waiting for the worm to turn over, its crystal-like blue eyes took position in the sky.

The Thousand-Tentacle Worm could sense the strong danger. However, when it struggled to turn over, it was already too late. There was the flash of a knife, and then the worm howled in pain. The pain provoked its instinct to kick, but kicking in the air would only make a loud noise.

It would be fatal, even if it was just an unconscious counterattack. Luo Yuan, who hadn't landed on the ground yet, turned pale. He had just had that thought when his body was teleported a few meters into the air.

For those with low Will, the thoughts in their hearts were just plain thoughts. On the other hand, thoughts in the hearts of people with high Will directed their actions. As for those who had highly cohesive Will, their Will was their biggest strength.

In short, Will could be defined as the heart's thoughts. If one's Will was strong enough, any thought or wish could be granted.

Luo Yuan's Will was still far from making his every wish come true. However, small things like teleporting or reducing his landing momentum were still possible for him.

The Thousand-Tentacle Worm had suffered a big wound. Dull red blood was spurting out like a high-pressure fountain while internal organs flowed out of its body. Its intense struggle made the buildings in the area collapse, producing smoke and dust in a several-kilometer radius.

As soon as Luo Yuan landed on the ground, he rushed towards the worm. However, the giant lizard reacted faster, following its instinct and taking advantage of the situation to attack its weak rival. The lizard ran towards it quickly and gripped the internal organs of the Thousand-Tentacle Worm. Not even looking at the organ it had bitten, it started tearing it until the the organ got longer and longer.

The crypt worm was paralyzed. Its neck had been broken, so it could not turn its head around to bite the giant lizard, no matter how hard it tried. The lower half of its body had already been

paralyzed. It tried hard to move, but it couldn't. All it could do was just stare at the giant lizard while the beast kept pulling at its organs.

The worm howled in sorrow, its big mouth showing its outrageous ability once again. It inhaled a massive amount of air. The wound around its neck seemed to have been transformed into an air vent and started spurting wind out. Numerous internal organs were spurted out as the worm vomited blood, approaching its end.

This was the moment Luo Yuan had been waiting for. Considering his weight, if he got sucked in, he'd have no chance of escaping. Even his Will would not be able to save him. He skipped through the wasteland, moving forward like a cat before he dashed toward the Thousand-Tentacle Worm's head.

Luo Yuan held his sword and slashed along the way as he ran. He cut more than ten tentacles off the beast's head. The worm tried to drill into the ground before it finally collapsed.

It didn't have the strength to fight back anymore. All it could do was move its head a tiny bit.

To avoid any more unexpected incidents, Luo Yuan did not waste time. He jumped up to crypt worm's head, took a deep breath and raised his sword.

Realizing it was at the threshold of death, the crypt worm began to struggle. It shook its head hard, trying to shake off the creature

on its head. Luo Yuan though would not move an inch.

“Go to hell!” he yelled.

A light flashed as he stabbed its head with his sword.

The worm’s skull was extremely hard, and the fact that Luo Yuan had used more than half of his Will during the fight made the stabbing even more challenging. He cut three points into the skull before he could hardly continue anymore.

“Just break already!”

Luo Yuan roared angrily, squeezing his muscles once again. Blood dripped from his skin in beads. His Will coagulated and gave the sword a trace of light. The sharp blade cut into the Thousand-Tentacle Worm’s dense bones in an instant. Luo Yuan slashed from its brain all the way to its jaw.

The worm shook, its head falling to the ground with a loud noise.

Luo Yuan gasped, holding his position, the sword still in his hands. The flush on his face slowly faded away, his muscles returning to their original size. The energy in his body dropped rapidly. Suddenly, he felt like he was about to collapse.

His hands were trembling, and he did not even have the energy to pull out the sword.

The loss of Will made him feel even worse. His uneasiness increased as fear grew inside his heart, bumping and crashing against its every corner like a horse tied loosely.

He could not hold on anymore. He fell on the crypt worm.

His body started getting hot. At first, Luo Yuan was not concerned about it. He thought it might be some kind of sequela due to exhaustion. As time passed though, his body became hotter and hotter, his blood reaching a boiling point. He felt like there was a fire burning inside his body, and he started to get dizzy. Something was wrong. He struggled to stand up, but he realized he had no strength at all. He was not in control of his body anymore. It would not listen to him at all.

A sudden sleepiness hit him, his eyelids getting heavy. The massive loss of Will did not allow him to hold on anymore.

Just as Luo Yuan was about to fall asleep, a mission accomplishment message popped up.

“Mission E+, Kill the Thousand-Tentacle Crypt Worm: Accomplished. Mission Completion Time: 5 minutes 35 seconds, Mission Evaluation: Excellent!”

“Character: Luo Yuan”

“Mission Progress: 80%”

“Basic Experience Reward $+4,800 \times 80\%$!”

“Evaluation: Excellent, Experience $+4,800 \times 80\%$ ”

“Experience: 3,400/38,400!”

Battle Beast: Giant Jungle Lizard

“Mission Progress: 20%”

“Basic Experience Reward $+4,800 \times 20\%$!”

Evaluation: Average, Experience $+4,800 \times 20\%$!”

“Experience: 2,600/4,800!”

“You have leveled up! You have been rewarded one attribute point and five skill points. Your current level is Level 8!”

“Your energy and injuries will be recovered!”

Chapter 115: The Return

Luo Yuan was about to lose consciousness when his spirit was elevated, and he started slowly regaining his strength. His Will had increased as well. He tried hard to lift his heavy eyelids and stand up.

However, what worried Luo Yuan was that strange feeling in his body that did not seem to go away. Instead, it became more serious as time passed. He could feel fire burning inside his body. He thought he might self-ignite soon if it did not stop.

“Could it be venom?”

Watching the giant lizard devour the Thousand-Tentacle Crypt Worm’s organs, he knew that the answer was no. If the crypt worm had been venomous, no matter how strong the giant lizard was, it would have had some sort of reaction after swallowing so much of its flesh and blood.

He suppressed his fear and checked his own body carefully. His back hurt after getting hit by a large rock, but other than that he did not have any serious injuries. The disgusting smell coming from the mutated beast’s brain matter was by far the worst of it.

While Luo Yuan had been hacking open the beast’s skull, he had not bothered avoiding the brain matter, and he had ended up getting some all over his face.

The fact that he was getting weaker was getting his nerves.

Suddenly, he thought of his attribute point, and quickly opened up the Attributes Panel.

“I have no choice, I can only add my attribute point to Physique. I hope a 14-point Physique can help me get through this.”

Just as Luo Yuan was trying to distribute the point, the system sent him a new message.

“Warning! Warning! System analysis: A strong foreign gene has invaded your body, causing your genes to have an adverse reaction.”

“Right now you are evolving. There is a risk of failure, which might result in a genetic breakdown.”

“Please choose a safe place to fall asleep. Estimated evolution time is 10 to 30 minutes.”

Luo Yuan’s expression was incredulous. He did not know whether he should be surprised, or worried.

If he failed to evolve, he might die. Actually, he had no choice. Once the evolution started, it couldn’t be stopped. His survival or death depended solely on his destiny. Luo Yuan had to accept it, whether he wanted to or not.

He looked around him. This was obviously not a safe place. There was a dead mutated beast around, a dark blue level one, to be

specific. It was an irresistible temptation that would soon lure a lot of predators. Even dark blue level mutated beasts could show up.

He had to find a safe place.

The human genes and mutated beast genes inside him were having an intense war, destroying all his cells. The war involved every aspect, including but not limited to the genetic one, eventually using up all the strength he had accumulated through upgrading his level. Luo Yuan felt another round of exhaustion. His eyelids became heavier.

He understood that this was his body's self-defense. A genetic war was an intangible, invisible war, but nevertheless a brutal one. Every inch of territory counted. Any depletion of any property could be the key to the outcome of the war. Through sleeping, depletion could be reduced to the bare minimum and the supplementary energy could be used in the war. He needed to find a safe place to sleep. He looked left and right, his eyes shining when he saw the giant lizard. He hurriedly jumped down from the head of the worm. His legs were so weak, he almost slipped. This only made him more nervous. He dragged his feet towards the giant lizard, using all his strength to climb onto its back.

"Back to the residential area!" Luo Yuan shouted in a hoarse voice. He patted the lizard's back and leaned over it. Soon, he lost his senses.

Although the giant lizard did not have a high IQ, after such a long, systematic, violent training, certain words that had been used frequently had already been engraved onto its poor brain.

After hearing Luo Yuan's voice, the lizard stopped what it was doing, and inclined its head a bit, as if it were listening. Looking at all the internal organs it had pulled out, it hesitated.

The next moment, it opened its mouth, straightened its neck and swallowed the last piece.

It still deeply respected Luo Yuan. Even though it was reluctant to leave, it walked back to the residential area.

Where was Hu Fei? Why had so few people managed to escape? A slightly tanned, tall, muscular man was looking at the people in front of him. They had originally been more than fifty, yet now there were only about ten left. His face turned dark.

"Hei Ge, everyone just blindly escaped this time. No one knows where Hu Fei has run off to. Nobody expected this level of mutated beast to come over here. It's really hard to find resources now. Everything's gone!" a man wearing a mutated-beast leather jacket said, sounding broken-hearted. His face looked like it had been corroded. Small craters could be seen all over it, and there were several areas where even his bones were visible. He looked quite hideous.

"Our resources might be gone, but we'll find new ones. What's important now is finding somewhere safe to stay," a horse-faced man said in a husky voice.

"We definitely have to find a safe place. It's too dangerous here.

Any of us could die. Ma Lian, can you suggest somewhere we can go?" Hei Ge said as he nodded.

"Do you think I have safe places up my sleeve?" MaLian shook his head. Suddenly he seemed to remember something, and turned to a woman in the crowd. "Hey, you! Where was the place you took us to last time?"

A woman with filthy hair raised her head. She was wearing a ragged dress that failed to cover most of her body. Her snowy, white skin was exposed, and there were some dried stains on her blouse. She smelled really bad from head to toe. Noticing that there was someone looking at her, she said eagerly, "Big Brother, I am Huang Yuying."

"You wish to get beaten again, is that it?" MaLian glanced at her and squeezed her breast hard.

That part of her body was really sensitive to getting pinched. Huang Yuying turned pale from the pain of it. Nevertheless, she still managed a stiff, charming smile. "I'm sorry, Big Brother. It was Jingyue District. I used to live there."

"Damn, she never washes. My hand stinks now!" Ma Lian sniffed his palm and wiped it on the wet towel he kept in his pants. "Yes, Jingyue District. I remember it. There were things there that we didn't move. We won't run out of food anytime soon. Maybe we can hide over there for now?" MaLian addressed the crowd.

"Wouldn't it be dangerous? How about the shelter?" said a

disfigured young man.

“The shelter is too far,” said a middle-aged man in a suit holding a rifle. He shook his head calmly and added, “Those men are too savage. I’ve heard it from people who escaped from them. They said that they eat human flesh. They’re not easy to deal with. They could betray us.”

Hei Ge frowned and seemed to think for a while before saying, “Let’s go to Jingyue District then. It should be a safe journey. We’ll use melee weapons to deal with high-level mutated beasts.”

“We’ve been there before. It should be fine!” said the disfigured young man.

“Better safe than sorry.” HeiGe stared at him, holding a white knife made of mutated-beast teeth.

Several men turned in the other direction and walked towards the road. The rest of them followed quickly. Most of the people were women, all of them looking numb, like they had somehow lost their sanity. Huang Yuying touched her breast, which had gotten bruised from squeezing, before following the crowd towards the Jingyue District.

Other than meeting a couple of low-level mutated beasts, the whole journey was smooth. Within thirty minutes, they arrived at Jingyue District.

“This is not good. Is that a footprint?” the man in the suit bent down and inspected the footprint in the mud. His expression became nervous as he said, “It’s still fresh. No more than a day old. It’s dangerous here, we have to leave right away!”

“Are you sure?” Hei Ge asked seriously.

“You know I was an anti-smuggling officer at the Yunnan border. There was forest everywhere there. My judgment is never wrong.” The middle-aged man in the suit looked at the ground as he walked up and down. “There are a lot of messy footprints around here. Some are really old, but others are fresh. What we know for sure is that this is a busy road. The beast that made the most recent footprint must have just left here. I think it will come back sooner or later. It could actually be back any moment now.”

It had not been easy getting there, and now they had to leave again. They didn’t even know where would they go next. Hei Ge did not seem to want to give up. “Can you tell what level of mutated beast it was?” he asked hopefully.

If it was just an average one, why not take the risk and try to kill it? Level two mutated beasts could be killed with a rifle. Level three were a bit harder to kill, though. Last time, they’d had to sacrifice more than ten men to kill a severely injured level three mutated beast. An evolved person had died during that fight, and Deng Chao’s face had been disfigured. Their lack of experience had been a contributing factor. Some of them had been facing a creature like that for the first time in their lives.

The man in the suit shook his head. “It’s impossible to tell.

Judging by its footprint though, we can assume that it weighs more than ten tons, and is about four to five meters long, tail not included. Based on its size, it could be a level three mutated beast.”

The crowd sighed, the expression on their faces hopeless.

“Let’s call go, Hei Ge. It’s too dangerous here, we have to go somewhere else,” said Ma Lian, whose face was white as paper.

Suddenly, the man in the suit asked in a very suspicious tone, “How come there’s a man’s footprint here?”

Everyone looked over. They could see several fresh human footprints beside the big footprint of the mutated beast.

“Could there still be humans in the area?” the disfigured young man called Deng Chao asked uncertainly.

Suddenly, the ground shook slightly. Before they could react, an enormous creature appeared at the corner of the street.

There was a lustre of jade to its green scales, and its head was full of crescent-shaped, sharp spurs. It suddenly lifted its head and glared at them.

Everyone felt their head tingle. Those who had evolved remained calm, but the ordinary humans among them had a mental breakdown. Some of them couldn’t stand it and ran away. The team lost half its men in the blink of an eye.

Cold sweat started dripping down the foreheads of the fellow evolved people. Hei Ge gulped unconsciously, feeling the pressure in his heart. The mutated beast was way too big, and it had zero injuries. It couldn't be compared to the severely injured mutated beast they had fought previously. He quickly looked left and right.

His heart sank as he realized they were standing on a straight road. The nearest crossing was a few hundreds meters away. The buildings on Commercial Street near them were relatively short and if they hid there, the beast would find them in no time. There was no place for them to hide. He looked at the entrance of the district and shouted, "We've got no choice! Just head in and leave the rest to fate!"

Huang Yuying had turned dreadfully pale. She had to use all her strength to run and keep up with everyone else. This small district, where she had made a lot of memories, had now become a hazardous place. As the quake behind them got bigger, the beast got closer to them. Despair was all she could feel.

"Is there someone over there?" Ma Lian shouted suddenly, an incredulous look on his face.

They could see a few men and women standing together in a empty field far away. They looked like they were waiting for someone.

Huang Yuying was stunned as she looked at them absent-mindedly. Her legs moved habitually, like a machine's. As she

looked at their familiar faces, her heart flooded with mixed feelings.

Chapter 116: Evolving Ability

Huang Jiahui and the others had been too distracted by the motion of the giant lizard to notice that there was a bunch of people running towards them.

A slight of worry could be seen on Huang Jiahui's face as she prayed silently.

At first, it had only been her and Wang Shishi waiting outside. However, the others had noticed the expression on their faces. Both Huang Jiahui and Wang Shishi held a higher position in the house. It was their roof they were staying under after all. Even the blind would have noticed that Luo Yuan and his women had been behaving strange all day. After Luo Yuan had left, the two of them had remained anxious the whole morning. They did not seem able to sit down. Some of them sensed that there was something going on, so everyone had come out.

As the motion got stronger, they could see the figure of the giant lizard from afar.

Huang Jiahui looked carefully, stunned. She grabbed Wang Shishi's arm tight and mumbled, "Shishi, I'm not sure my eyes are working. You take a look and see if Luo Yuan is up there."

The giant lizard was five meters tall. Luo Yuan was lying on its back, his body blocked by the giant lizard's head. They could not see anything.

“I... I don’t know.” As Wang Shishi watched, she started getting nervous as well.

Cao Lin was there too, the astonishment in her heart ever the same. She peeped at the others, but they did not look any better than her.

Luo Yuan was their protector. Even if doomsday came around, he would still maintain the peace of this small place. She did not dare imagine what their future would look like without him. Her whole world turned dark. There was not even the slightest spark of life.

Suddenly, she noticed a bunch of people running towards them in panic.

Staying in a comfortable safe zone for so long had made her vigilance decrease. She had forgotten about the warning. She only realized that something was wrong when the other side aimed their rifles in their direction.

“Cooperate if you don’t want to die! Hurry up and take us somewhere safe!” Hei Ge shouted. He guessed that there had to be some secret hideout for these people to have survived around a mutated beast for so long. That was why he had run towards them without hesitation.

Huo Dong and the other men froze in the face of this unexpected situation. They did not answer the question.

Hei Ge was very nervous. He almost collapsed as he watched the giant lizard get closer. He raised his pistol. “Damn, does nobody talk around here?”

“What do you want? This is not some place you can act in such an uncivilized manner.” Lin Xiaoji had gotten mad. He had to hold his emotions back all the time, but he was not going to anymore. Not when a stranger was being so rude to him.

“How dare you talk back to me? Do you think I won’t fire?” Anxiety, fear, anger, irritation-all kinds of negative emotions surged in his heart, driving him out of his mind. Even his face looked twisted.

Bang! Bang! Bang!

He raised his pistol, and started pulling the trigger until he ran out of bullets. Then he still kept shooting on with the empty gun.

Lin Xiaoji lowered his head to his chest. He saw fresh blood on his shirt before he fell to the ground.

Wang Shishi screamed in shock.

The gunshots had awakened Huang Jiahui, who had been passed out. She tried to grab the pistol on her waist, but she felt a cold, sharp object poke her in the back while a voice said, “Just don’t move. If you do, I will use my knife. Take us somewhere safe! Fast!”

Luo Yuan's absence had made Huang Jiahui so desperate, she thought maybe death would not be such a bad idea.

Huang Yuying, who was also there, noticed that Huang Jiahui did not seem to care at all, and quickly shouted, "No, Sister Huang!"

"It's you?" Huang Jiahui heard her familiar voice and turned around with a frown. There was fire in her eyes now. "You brought these men here? I took pity on you last time, but I never thought you'd be such an ungrateful person!"

"I... I'm not!" Huang Yuying was panicked. She wanted to explain, but she didn't have the time to. All these men had come there because of her. She was also the one who had taken people to raid the supplies of the old house. No matter what she said, it would be hard to make them trust her.

Hei Ge was so angry, he felt like his head was about to explode. Why was nobody listening to him? Did he look too kind? Didn't they see that he had guns and knives? Weren't they scared of dying?

Alright, he would grant their wish. Just as he was about to reload his gun, somebody stopped him.

"Hei Ge, don't waste time on these people. Who cares if they don't want to leave? We can get to the villa first!" said the man in the suit.

Hei Ge held back his temper and nodded. He looked at the crowd and quickly headed into the villa. Huang Yuying hesitated for a while. Everybody was too nervous to care about her.

“There must be a safe place somewhere in here. Everyone scatter and search. Hurry up!” said Hei Ge after rushing into the villa.

The house was not very big, and there were a lot of people searching through it. It did not take them long to discover the entrance to the basement. Everyone entered it quickly, astonished by the amount of supplies inside it.

“There’s so much food! It must be more than one hundred packs. It’s enough to sustain us for half a year,” said Ma Lian in surprise. “Dried pork slices? Mineral water? Damn, they even have an electric generator! What are they doing, generating electricity?”

“Shit, they really are generating electricity. It’s connected to a cable,” the young man with the scars shouted.

“Damn, can you see all this? We’ll have plenty of time to observe it in the future. Now, don’t speak, everyone. Stay silent. If the mutated beast finds us, then everything will be over,” Hei Ge said angrily.

Everyone felt scared as the basement suddenly became quiet. That was when they realized that there were no sounds coming from outside. They looked at each other with puzzled expressions.

The giant lizard stopped at a grass field a few hundreds meters away from the villa, just like it always used to. It looked at the crowd indifferently before it closed its eyes and started snoring.

“Brother Luo, it’s Brother Luo! He’s on the back of the lizard!” screamed Wang Shishi.

Huang Jiashi stared at the back of the giant lizard and saw Luo Yuan lying there motionless. Her happiness turned fast into worry. “He’s injured! I don’t know if it’s serious or not. Wait here, I need to go and find out!”

Cao Lin was scared, but she still held Huang Jiahui back. “Don’t go, you will startle the lizard.”

“Don’t stop me!” Huang Jiahui said as she turned around. “Do it again, and we won’t be friends anymore.”

Cao Lin loosened her arms unconsciously. When she got her senses back, Huang Jiahui was already running towards the lizard.

“Wang Xiaojie, hurry up and stop her. Only you can do it!” said Cao Lin. If anything happened to Huang Jiahui and Luo Yuan awakened, they would all be screwed.

Wang Shishi shook her head, her eyes full of tears. “I want to go and see as well!”

She wiped off her tears as she cried and ran towards the giant lizard.

Everyone stared at each other in astonishment. They was nothing they could do. They couldn't offend Luo Yuan or his women.

Traditional Chinese culture relied on hierarchy. It was important to learn how to be a better person before you could do anything. Pleasing others was something every adult going into society had to know. Displeasing someone that your fate depended on was definitely something to avoid.

“How? Should we go, too?” Huo Dong hesitated.

“Brother Luo saved all our lives. I have no way to repay him, even my life is not enough. I want to go too!” Ning Xiaoran said with red eyes.

“Let's go together!” concluded Chen Xianfeng.

No one could say no under the circumstances, regardless of how unwilling they were to go.

“I... I need to take care of Lin Xiaoji,” Sun Xiaowu said in terror. His face turned red as everyone looked at him oddly.

Huo Dong smirked. Sun Xiaowu and Lin Xiaoji had never had a close relationship. They never even talked to each other, yet now

Sun Xiaowu was saying that he wanted to take care of him. The man had gotten so many shots, even an evolved person would have died. There was nothing to be done to help him.

Lin Xiaoji had been with them for a really short period of time. He had showed zero emotion and he had been very arrogant. Other than the evolved people, he had treated everybody else like they were invisible. He had been lying over there for so long, yet nobody had actually gone to check whether he was really dead or not.

Huo Dong did not want to offend anyone, but Cao Lin was not afraid to do it. She sarcastically said, “He is already dead, how would you take care of him? Couldn’t you come up with a better excuse to flee? Aren’t you talented at bragging! You always talk about how you used to fight in high school. Where are your guts now?”

All this while, Sun Xiaowu had been admiring this intellectual beauty. He had always made an extra effort to please her whenever he could. Now, the woman he liked was insulting him in such a sarcastic, merciless way. His face turned red as his blood boiled. Young men don’t like to lose face. Once he got her out of his mind, he didn’t care about anything at all. Disrespectful words that he would not have dared say normally, now flew freely out of his mouth.

“What if I don’t want to go? You can’t drag me there to die with you, Luo Yuan might be strong, but it’s only because he was lucky enough to evolve. So what? He’s still injured now. You want to go lick his ass again?”

“Shut up!” Cao Lin did not look good.

“I’m not going to!” Sun Xiaowu knew there was no return. “He’s just an evolved person. Why do you need to try and please him all the time? I think you just can’t wait to have sex with him. One day, I will also evolve. You guys just wait!”

Cao Lin’s face kept switching between red and white. Her lips started bleeding from her biting them non-stop.

Suddenly, Chen Xianfeng ran towards him and kicked him to the ground. Sun Xiaowu scowled as he tried to get up. Before he could though, he got his chest kicked a few more times. He started crying as he covered his head.

“Damn it, just beat me to death if you dare,” Sun Xiaowu shouted, standing up unsteadily.

Cao Lin walked up to him and slapped him. “If you don’t want to die. just get out!”

The slap seemed to bring Sun Xiaowu back to his senses. He looked around, and saw everyone looking back at him distantly. Even Ning Xiaoran, who no one dared offend, had a poker face on. She looked at him like he was a stranger.

Her emotionless expression made him feel cold and dizzy.

What had he said? How could he have said something like that? He managed a stiff smile, trying to diffuse the situation. “I... I don’t know what...”

“Why don’t you just leave?” Bullying someone who was at disadvantage was poor form. Huo Dong sneered, “Do you want us to break your legs, too?”

Sun Xiaowu could not control his emotions. He knew that he could no longer stay there. He looked at Luo Yuan in the distance. Nobody knew whether he was alive or not. He thought of that bunch of fierce people, and he smiled as he said, “Fine, I will leave. I will leave! I hope you don’t regret this.”

He grinned and pointed at the crowd. He slowly backed off and dashed towards the villa. Soon, he’d gone through the doorway.

Everyone’s expression changed at the same time.

Sun Xiaowu knew everything about the area. Nobody knew whether Luo Yuan was dead or alive. Once Sun Xiaowu leaked information, the consequences would be unimaginable. Judging by the way he had acted just now, that kind of scenario seemed unavoidable.

“Damn it, we should not have just let him go like that!” Huo Dong said angrily.

They were just stepping out of their comfort zone. They were still

not used to murdering people, but they had never expected their soft hearts to bring such consequences.

“With the giant lizard here, those people won’t dare do anything,” Cao Lin tried to comfort them and herself. “Let’s go and see how Brother Luo is. If he makes it, he will control the lizard and everything will be alright. Let’s go and find out.”

By this time, Huang Jiahui was already in front of the giant lizard. The closer she got to it, the bigger the lizard looked. Although it was lying on the ground, it was still three meters high and about seven meters long. It looked like a thick wall.

Normally, Huang Jiahui would not have dared go near it. She felt so stressed, it got harder to breath as she got closer to the beast. She only cared about Luo Yuan’s safety. She did not care about anyone else.

The giant lizard felt the creatures nearby and raised its transparent eyelids, exposing its huge cold eyes. It saw two small creatures approaching from the side and closed its eyes once again.

These creatures used to be its main food source. Its poor brain couldn’t remember how much of them it had eaten in its life. If it hadn’t been lucky enough to meet that creature and obey him, it would probably still be eating these kind of creatures.

For the giant lizard, this type of food was nothing. Their flesh was too soft and loose, almost tasteless. It didn’t feel full no matter how many of them it ate. It would only eat them when it had no

other choice. It had no interest in this kind of food anymore.

No matter how hungry it was, it dared not eat them. After suffering several punishments, its poor brain finally knew this much– do not mess with these creatures, no matter how weak they look.

The two of them were shocked when the giant lizard opened its eyes. They sweated non-stop and almost slid down to the ground.

“It’s nothing, it’s nothing! The giant lizard recognizes us!” Huang Jiahui said as she patted her own chest.

“Luo... Brother Luo had mentioned to me that the lizard won’t eat humans. We could even sit on it and play,” Wang Shishi muttered. She had almost been shocked to death. For a moment, she had thought she would really die. She still felt scared, and her body shivered non-stop.

“Yeah, Luo Yuan also mentioned that the giant lizard is very gentle,” said Huang Jiahui.

The two of them comforted each other and regained the courage to move forward once again.

After a few minutes, Huang Jiahui touched the giant lizard’s scales. She was trembling like crazy. “It’s too slippery. There is no place for us to place our feet while we climb. It’s impossible.”

“What if I bring him down using telekinesis?” said Wang Shishi.

Wang Jiahui was quiet for a while. There was no other way, she had to make a decision. “Give it a try, but be careful. Don’t let him fall.”

When Wang Shishi started using her power, the giant lizard reacted by lifting its eyelids. Realizing that the power was not a threat to it, it closed its eyes again.

The two of them used all their energy to move Luo Yuan down and set him on the ground carefully. In less than a minute, both of their backs were wet.

Meanwhile, the others had also walked over. Despite the fact that the giant lizard was not attacking them, everyone held their breath. They were too scared that they would alert the beast.

“I used to be a nurse. I know some basic first aid. Let me take a look, Sister Huang,” said Ning Xiaoran softly.

Huang Jiahui nodded and moved to make space for Ning Xiaoran.

Ning Xiaoran blushed as she took off Luo Yuan’s clothes. Everyone gasped in astonishment when they saw that the bulletproof vest was full of holes.

Huang Jiahui covered her mouth and turned her head away. Tears were rolling down on her cheeks.

Ning Xiaoran's eyes were also red. She had to use all her might to take off the heavy bulletproof vest, revealing Luo Yuan's strong upper body. His tenuous flesh stretched tight as he inhaled and exhaled like a precise machine, exuding a sense of strength and grace. Even the men could not help but stare.

Ning Xiaoran took a deep breath and softly pressed against his chest with her petite hands. When she turned him over, she saw that he had black and purple bruises all over his back.

She covered her mouth in fear. She carefully touched his back as she said, "Brother Luo must have spit up blood earlier. His back must have been hit by something heavy. It didn't break, but he must have spiked a fever. His internal organs might have been injured.

"What can we do?" cried Wang Shishi.

"There is no medical equipment or medicine here. His survival depends solely on his luck."

"No, Luo Yuan has suffered more serious injuries before. He always makes it, this time will be no different." Huang Jiahui was having a small breakdown. She rushed towards Luo Yuan and held his hand. "Luo Yuan, please wake up. You will be alright."

Wang Shishi was crying so hard, she couldn't seem to catch her breath.

Huo Dong silently picked up a piece of the scale bulletproof vest. He tried to break it, but he could not even make the slightest tear. He had to use all his strength just to bend the piece a little.

His heart trembled. If such hard protective gear had been damaged, he could not imagine what kind of attack Luo Yuan had suffered this time. It was already a miracle that he was not dead.

Just when everyone thought that Luo Yuan would not make it, Huang Jiahui suddenly felt him move his hand slightly. The next moment, she saw Luo Yuan slowly open his eyes and sit up.

He looked right and left, and then looked at everyone and calmly said, "I did not expect to be here when I woke up. I'm fine, you can all go."

He stood up under everyone's glassy looks. Huang Jiahui and Wang Shishi felt like idiots. Just now they had been crying like there was no tomorrow, and Luo Yuan had just stood up like nothing had happened.

"Really? You're fine? What about your back?" Huang Jiahui said suspiciously. She thought that maybe Luo Yuan was just pretending to be fine.

"I'm aware of my injuries. They're just surface wounds, it's no big deal," Luo Yuan said while he picked up his clothes and put them on.

It was the truth. The injury on his back might look serious to others, but the system upgrade had included a recovery function. He had already healed most of the way. The rest would just depend on his self-healing skill. He would most likely have fully recovered in a few days' time.

He suddenly felt a slight change on his face. He closed his eyes and felt a mysterious feeling flow through his body as he stepped on the ground. He could feel the land below his feet blending with him and the pulse of the ground beating.

Chapter 117: Come Murder With Me

The feeling was amazing, yet unrealistic at the same time.

Luo Yuan pulled up the attributes panel silently.

“Character: Luo Yuan”

“Career: Hunter”

“Level: 8”

“Experience: 3,400/38,400”

“Attributes:-”

“Strength: 12 (10)”

“Dexterity: 13 (10)”

“Physique: 13+3 (10)”

“Intelligence: 13 (10)”

“Sensory Perception: 13+1 (10)”

“Will: 14+1 (10)”

“Skills: Physics 16, Math 14, Mandarin 19, English 16, Finance 17,

Calculation 9, Dancing 1, Drawing 3, Gaming 6, Negotiating 9,

Socializing 7, Cooking 3, Driving 1, Hand-to-hand Combat 5,

Knife Skill: 13, Shooting Skill: 1”

“Unique Skills: Identification, Synthesizing”

“Battle Beast: Giant Jungle Lizard (Level 3)”

“Innate Abilities: Earth Stomp (Level 3)”

“Unassigned Property Points: 1”

“Unassigned Skill Points: 5”

“Incomplete Missions: None”

Luo Yuan noticed that the attributes panel had an additional

option just like the giant lizard's innate ability.

He selected the innate ability sub-option.

“Earth Stomp”

“Level: 3 (Related to Sensory Perception and Strength)”

“Effect: Regional Attack, Chance of Dizziness; Strength+3 (Related to Level)”

“Element: Earth”

“Remarks: Do not leave the ground. The ground is your friend. You will never feel tired as long as both of your legs are on the ground; you can always feel its pulse. Human strength is limited, but the universe's strength is limitless. With the Earth's strength on your side, you will never lose a fight!”

“This evolution is way too powerful!”

He could feel everything on the ground within a distance of fifty meters from where he was standing. There was some sort of connection between him and the Earth. He could not reach at a further distance, though. The distance seemed to depend on his Sensory Perception.

The pulse of the Earth made him feel confused. The vibration

was too complex. It felt disorganized, like different kinds of chaos all mixed together. However, there was a subtle pattern. He guessed that the endless waves interfered with one another, somehow mixing together.

He could only experiment to discover the fixed pattern.

He opened his eyes with joy on his face. Even if the strength of the attack was weak, the three extra points of Strength were more than enough to make him happy.

It was a pity that his Physique could not significantly improve his actual Strength. Within such a short period of time, this kind of Physique would be a waste. There would be an advantage in his next upgrade though. His Physique would be put aside to increase his Strength and Dexterity in the future.

Nevertheless, there was no need to rush. An evolved human's Physique was special. It seemed to break the limitations of normal humans. During this time, Sun Xiaowu and Ning Xiaoran had improved a lot. Luo Yuan could not figure out what Sun Xiaowu's ability was, but it mainly affected his Physique. As for Ning Xiaoran, Luo Yuan estimated that her Strength had already surpassed 11 points.

This was not because they had been consuming blue rank mutated beast flesh. Although massive consumption could elevate Physique up to 11 points, that only applied to men. The majority of women were between 10 and 11 points. Wang Shishi and Huang Jiahui both fell within that range.

This could only be explained by the special physique of evolved people.

Of course, Wang Shishi was also evolved, but maybe evolved people had different reactions to sub-attributes, and that was why her body was no different than ordinary people's.

Luo Yuan decided to undergo intense training to see if he could break his own limits. Only then would he be able to solve his attribute problem.

"What's the matter?" asked Huang Jiahui, who was still worried. She looked at him blankly as he stood there motionless. She thought his wounds might still hurt.

Luo Yuan came back to his senses. He only realized he had been standing there for a while when he saw Huang Jiahui's anxious face. He reassured her by saying, "Just thinking about something."

He realized everyone was looking at him from afar uneasily. They did not dare get closer. Luo Yuan asked doubtfully, "Was it Huang Yuying?"

Huang Jiahui remained silent, her face expressionless.

It was Wang Shishi who said angrily, "That shameless woman! Last time she stole our food, and now she brought a group of people and took our house. They killed Lin Xiaoji too!"

“What happened here?” Luo Yuan addressed his question to Huang Jiahui. He did not trust Wang Shishi’s words.

Huang Jiahui told him about the incident from beginning to end.

When he heard about Sun Xiaowu’s betrayal, his face sank. He had thought that Sun Xiaowu was quite nice. He never would have thought that he would turn out to be like that. At such a critical time, not only had he not helped them, but he had talked nonsense and aligned himself with the enemy.

“How many men do they have? Any evolved people?” asked Luo Yuan calmly.

The calmer Luo Yuan was, the more pressure the others felt. They could all sense his anger and urge to kill.

“They did not show their abilities. We were surrounded before we knew it.” Huang Jiahui looked embarrassed. Her reaction had been awful. She had not demonstrated the least bit of awareness or vigilance. Had the others not been scared of the giant lizard, the consequences would have been far worse than they could imagine. She felt terrified.

“Is Huang Yuying one of them?” asked Luo Yuan.

Huang Jiahui hesitated a little before she nodded.

Luo Yuan's expression was terrifying. As he walked up to Huang Yuying, some of them turned away. They dared not witness the ruthless scene. Huang Jiahui wanted to say something, but in the end she didn't.

Huang Yuying had aged a lot in such a short time. Her body was full of stains and bruises, and she looked like she had not had a bath in days. Her dress was full of holes and failed to cover her seductive body.

Watching Luo Yuan walk towards her, she shivered like a scared bird. She seemed to remember the bloody scene when Luo Yuan had killed a number of enemies.

“What can you say for yourself?” asked Luo Yuan.

Huang Yuying was unexpectedly calm as she said, “Kill me if you want. I'm tired of living. I told them to take the food. So what? You were all gone, why couldn't I have some? What did I do wrong?”

He had no words. Huang Yuying had done nothing wrong in that case. They had already abandoned those supplies. It was just that he had not expected that he would not be able enter the underground base and would have to return there once again.

Judging by how she looked, despite the fact that she had provided the food supplies, she still had not been treated well. All her exposed body parts were bruised, and there were scars on her that looked like they'd been made by cigarettes. Luo Yuan could

not imagine had she had been through. In this wild world, humanity was hard to find and brutality had gotten out of control. Beauty was no longer a blessing from above, but a curse from the Devil.

Luo Yuan looked at Huang Yuying, who looked hopeless, and he shook his head as he said calmly, “What you have done makes me really mad, but it’s not a reason to kill you. I can tell just by looking at you that you had nothing to do with Lin Xiaoji’s death.”

Huang Yuying had not expected Luo Yuan to let her off that easily. She felt relieved. Who would want to die given a different choice? Luo Yuan turned around to leave. Huang Yuying hesitated a bit before she shouted, “Wait, they have three evolved people! I’ve only seen one use his power. He can produce rays of light. The one holding the gun is very strong as well. Be careful, will you?”

Luo Yuan nodded. Just as he was about to walk away, he suddenly turned around and said, “If you’re not happy staying with them, you can come back!”

To Luo Yuan, one more person meant one more mouth to feed. However, for Huang Yuying this was like a lightning in her dark soul, brightening up her whole world.

She was shocked. She covered her mouth as tears flowed nonstop down her cheeks, falling one by one on the ground. Luo Yuan’s words had touched her. Her throat felt like it was blocked by something as she cried soundlessly.

When Luo Yuan was ten meters away, she squatted down and cried her heart out, making everyone feel sympathy towards her.

Lin Xiaoji lay on the ground motionless, his clothes soaked in fresh blood.

Luo Yuan looked at him for a while before he picked up a bullet squeezed out of his body. He suddenly kicked the corpse and said, “Get up, stop pretending!”

The corpse remained unmoving.

Luo Yuan grinned. “Do you want me to stab you again?”

Lin Xiaoji opened his tightly closed eyes, and stood up awkwardly.

He had never expected those men to be so violent. After getting shot a few times, he had started to regret speaking out. No matter how strong his self-healing ability, if he got shot in the head or got injured too badly, he would still die. Afraid as he was, he had pretended to be dead.

Everyone’s eyes widened in surprise. Wang Shishi stared at him. “You just pretended to die?”

After a while, Lin Xiaoji blushed and said, “Indeed, I... I fainted just now.”

Luo Yuan looked truly unsatisfied with his actions. His eyes focused on him as he slowly said, "I'll let it go this time, but make sure there is no next time. Deserters will be executed by shooting."

Lin Xiaoji's face turned red and his heart beat fast. He was terrified by Luo Yuan's threat.

Luo Yuan knew that the man had very high self-esteem. He didn't think he'd make such a stupid mistake again, so he decided to forgive him this time.

Luo Yuan's acute senses noticed something shaking by the entrance of villa. His face changed as his body vanished. His speed burst to the maximum. He crossed more than ten meters in just a breath's time.

There was a man trying to spot the giant lizard through a crack between the door and the frame. He heard the crisp sound of a knife, and sensed something blue that had to be the cold blade of the knife rapidly magnifying before his eyes. Before he got a chance to react, Luo Yuan thrust the knife directly into his brow, pushing it out the back of his head.

Everyone watched as the man fell to the ground through the door crack.

Luo Yuan slowly pulled out his knife, blood spilling all over the ground. He looked at the door, unable to hold back his killing urge anymore.

Huang Jiahui still felt embarrassed about her earlier reaction. When she saw Luo Yuan ready for murder, she quickly volunteered in an effort to prove herself to him, “Do you need help?”

Luo Yuan wanted to decline, but when he thought of his people getting surrounded without a chance to fight back, he hesitated.

Not every normal human lacked the ability to revolt. They had three evolvers, but Huang Jiahui was great at shooting. She could handle a blue rank mutated beast. It wasn't like she did not have the ability to revolt. At least in theory. Reality had proved quite different. Although, to be fair, she had probably just gotten nervous after seeing him faint.

Regardless of the reasons of their strength, if they did not possess even the basic awareness, they wouldn't be able to survive in the future. It was time for them to see blood.

“Wang Shishi will come with me inside. You, Ning Xiaoran and Lin Xiaoji will guard the entrance to prevent anyone from escaping. Be careful!”

Huang Jiahui looked at Wang Shishi and nodded.

“Shishi, are you scared?” asked Luo Yuan.

“I'm not!” Fear had flooded Wang Shishi's heart, but she still managed to gather her courage.

“I’m talking about murdering people.” Luo Yuan was serious.

“I’m not... scared,” Wang Shishi hesitated.

“Louder!”

“I’m not scared!” shouted Wang Shishi.

“Good, come with me. Stay behind me.” Luo Yuan looked at Wang Shishi’s tiny face. It was full of fear and excitement, her expression a mix of the two emotions. He did not feel so good all of a sudden. She was just fourteen years old. She should not be worrying about anything, much less be forced to kill people.

Chapter 118: Cruel Slaughtering

Surprisingly, it was a woman that was found dead by the door. Her face was covered with dust. Luo Yuan could only identify her gender based on the size of her chest. She was lying on her back, her eyes popping out like she had died with a grievance.

Luo Yuan stepped over the body, but Wang Shishi was not brave enough. She skirted around it as if the woman would suddenly jump up. She was holding the sharp shuttle tightly in her hand while she used her telekinesis.

Luo Yuan walked into the living room. With his sensory perception, no one could escape or hide from him.

He signaled for Wang Shishi to stay in the living room. Wang Shishi nodded nervously and sprinted to a corner, where she could launch a surprise attack if anyone entered the living room from the storeroom. Luo Yuan nodded, pleased to discover that she was not that stupid after all.

He entered the storeroom and stood somewhere close to the wall.

The basement only had one exit. Therefore, he did not have to take the risk of breaking in. None of them could escape provided that he stayed exactly where he was.

Luo Yuan was no longer unfamiliar with evolved people. After all, he had three evolved people with him and he had evolved as well. Evolved people though had all kinds of abilities, some of

them kind of odd.

Some were strong while others were weak. Lin Xiaoji was weak as his ability could not be used to attack, but only to protect himself. Wang Shishi, on the other hand, was very strong. If she demonstrated her full power, even Luo Yuan would have to retreat temporarily.

However, Wang Shishi was quite lazy and thus lacked the necessary practice. If he came across an evolved person who practiced hard every day, even Luo Yuan could lose the fight. Therefore, he was very cautious. Cautiousness had become second nature to him since the beginning of that dangerous time.

The people in the storeroom were having an intense argument.

“F*ck, it’s been 5 minutes. Why is she not back yet? Could she have run away?” Ma Lian said impatiently as he looked at his watch in the dark.

Brother Hei was walking around irritably. He looked kind of uncomfortable. He suddenly turned and glared at the man who had rebelled against his people. He walked up to him, grabbed his collar, pushed him against the wall and said ferociously, “You brat, are you messing with us? If you dare lie, I’ll show you what the life of the living dead feels like!”

“Boss, how could I ever mess with you? I told you the truth.” Sun Xiaowu was in so much pain that his voice sounded croaky. “That mutated beast is really controlled by the leader of the group, Luo

Yuan. We stand a good chance now that he's fainted. If he wakes up, though..."

Sun Xiaowu started to say something, but he could not continue.

"What if he wakes up?" Brother Hei snorted.

"He... he would kill us all!" Sun Xiaowu stammered. He was truly afraid of Luo Yuan. Even the idea of facing him made him anxious. If these people were strong enough, they would not have gone into hiding as soon as they'd seen the giant lizard.

They reacted like they'd heard something funny. They all burst out laughing.

"I knew you wouldn't believe me!" Sun Xiaowu became very worried. They were not taking him seriously. If Luo Yuan was still alive, he would eventually kill him.

He suddenly became very daring. He pushed brother Hei away and walked briskly towards the dried meat hanging from the ceiling. He tremblingly pointed at it and shouted, "What do you think these are? They are the inner organs of a third rank mutated beast, just like the giant lizard outside. Just the day before yesterday, Luo Yuan removed inner organs from three different animals. What's so funny? You can't even deal with the giant lizard outside! Is this really funny to you?"

A heavy slap on the face made him fall him to the floor.

“Watch your mouth,” the guy with the scar said sharply.

The laughing stopped. The whole basement had gone silent.

Brother Hei became very serious. He walked briskly to the wall, put his ear on it and listened quietly for a while before he punched the wall. There was a loud sound, and the thick cemented wall cracked.

“Shall we send someone out to check again?” Ma Lian suggested.

There were two men and one woman left. Their faces looked terrified. They were all shivering and trying hard to shrink against the wall.

Brother Hei nodded.

Ma Lian pulled up the weak woman. She was struggling hard, begging for forgiveness while she sobbed. Mucus and tears were dripping all over her face. Ma Lian kicked her ferociously, grabbing her hair tightly and hitting her head hard against the floor.

The woman struggled at first, but she gradually stopped. A mixture of bone scraps and fresh blood had spilled out onto the floor.

“Enough, she’s dead!” Brother Hei growled hoarsely. He sounded annoyed.

“It’s her own fault!” Ma Lian murmured, releasing his hands. He looked at the scratches made by her nails and kicked the body a few times to vent his anger.

Sun Xiawu was lying on the floor while he watched. He was frightened. He suddenly regretted acting on impulse. If he hadn’t, he wouldn’t have been there now, feeling afraid.

“That’s what happens when you don’t do as you’re told,” Ma Lian said coldly, looking at one of the men. “Your turn now.”

The man looked scared, but having watched that woman die, he dared not speak a single word. He grabbed a gun, stood up and walked towards the staircase that led to the first floor.

He opened the trapdoor and walked out carefully before he closed it again, bending down.

He had yet to stand up straight when a strong palm pressed against his mouth and a clear bone-cracking sound was heard. He looked upwards in relief as he felt his body being pulled to the corner quickly. His sight gradually entered permanent darkness.

“Did you hear something just now?” the man in the suit said seriously as he leaned against the wall.

“It sounded like something being dragged,” the man with the scar said uncertainly.

“F*ck, someone must be in the storeroom,” Brother Hei said angrily.

He grabbed Sun Xiaowu and slapped him on the face hard. “Other than that Luo Yuan, are there any more evolved people?”

Sun Xiaowu felt dizzy. The right side of his face was swelling. After a while, he spit out a couple of bloody teeth and replied fearfully, “Yes, Boss, there are three of them!”

“Three?” Brother Hei glowered in anger. “F*ck! Why didn’t you say so earlier?”

“I... because... because the rest of them are not a threat compared to Luo Yuan!” Sun Xiaowu said quickly, afraid of being beaten again.

Brother Hei was enraged. He pointed his handgun at Sun Xiaowu’s forehead. “F*ck you, you son of a bitch. If you don’t tell me everything this time, I’ll shoot you.”

“Boss... don't shoot, don't shoot! I'll tell you everything!” Sun Xiaowu peed in his pants, scared of the gun pointing at him. “You have killed one of them, but there’s also a young woman wearing a yellow shirt. I’m not sure what power she has, but she can fly away when she gets attacked. The strongest one is a young girl. Her

ability is similar to telekinesis in movies, and her weapon is a shuttle. I saw her kill a second rank mutated beast once.”

Brother Hei and the others regretted not killing them all. They certainly would have if they’d known earlier.

“So, there are two women outside?” The man in the suit said abruptly. He was the only calm person in the room. “Since nobody can control the mutated beast other than Luo Yuan, all we need to do is deal with those two women. The location we’re in now is not favorable to us, though. If they’re cruel and willing to give up the available supplies here, they could use fire or poison to attack or block the exit. We need to get out of here as soon as possible.”

Brother Hei nodded and calmed down gradually. He had the impression that the two women and their abilities were not as powerful as the young woman in black. Although they were evolved too, they were not that strong.

“We shall go out now without any further delay,” Brother Hei said seriously, taking a blade sharpened from a mutated beast’s claw. “Please be careful.”

“It’s just a couple of women, what is there to be scared of?” Ma Lian smiled lewdly. “Too bad evolved people are dangerous, or we could capture them and take good care of them. Those two women look pretty good, especially the young woman in black. Her butt is big and round, I’d really like to hold it in my hands while I f*ck her.”

“Shut up, you and your f*cking fantasies,” Brother Hei scolded as he stared at him.

Ma Lian shut his mouth, looking ashamed.

“You, and you! You two go first! Fast!” Brother Hei said with a nasty grin on his face while he pointed his gun at Sun Xiaowu and the other man.

Sun Xiaowu felt frightened as he stood up. His eyes flashed with animosity and he lowered his head to prevent them from seeing it.

Brother Hei suddenly signaled for them to be silent. Then he turned towards the man in the suit and pointed at the trapdoor. The man in the suit got his meaning and nodded his head.

The trapdoor on the ceiling of the storeroom was suddenly hit by bullets. About 10 bullets ricocheted in the narrow space of the storeroom. Luo Yuan had already retreated out of the storeroom when they took out their guns. He leant his back against the wall outside the storeroom as he slowly drew out his Zhanmadao.

Using his sensory perception, Luo Yuan knew exactly what they were doing. Their information was inaccurate, so they had no chance of winning.

They finally came out. The two people that served as bait were carefully followed by four more men. Luo Yuan realized that one of them had a different kind of coordination. He could sense it with

his sensory perception. The distance between them was about a meter, but he had to be the person who could control light.

However, he did not know what type of abilities the other two possessed.

When he sensed the four of them walk out of the door, he moved. As he stepped on his tiptoes, his body shot like an arrow towards the tall man with the dark skin. He knew this man was the leader of the group and had to be the strongest among them. If he managed to kill him, the rest would be just a piece of cake.

He had not expected that the man would be sensitive to danger. He rolled before Luo Yuan could get near him and avoided his fatal attack.

“Uh,” Luo Yuan murmured, changing direction and pointing his Zhaomadao quickly towards the man’s throat.

The man responded quickly by stepping on the wall of the corridor and moving backwards, yet he could not avoid the hit completely.

The Zhanmadao peeled through his scalp and cut off a part of his hair about the size of a palm. Blood oozed out from the wound.

“Attack! Faster!” Brother Hei shouted in fear as he retreated, holding his bone knife.

The rest reacted quickly, the man in the suit starting to fire. While bullets shot out of the gun, small stones spattered from the walls.

The person with the scar suddenly expanded his body and became a muscular giant. He howled, and the ground began to shake slightly as he strode over.

Luo Yuan's body suddenly turned vague, looking like numerous shadows gathered at the same place. Several bullets went passed him but did not hit him. After he'd used up his bullets, Luo Yuan snorted and sprinted, grazing the guy with the scar with his sword.

The man jerked back and his muscular arms suddenly dropped. He lowered his head to look at his chest. His shirt, which had become tighter because of the expanded muscles, had a cut on it, and a large amount of blood oozed out from the wound. He was terrified. His body slanted and he half-slumped against the wall while a great howl echoed throughout the villa.

When Sun Xiaowu saw Luo Yuan, he freaked out. Realizing he was not targeting him, he ran for life as fast as his legs could carry him.

As he reached the living room, a shuttle flew over him at bullet speed and landed right in front of him. When he saw Wang Shishi staring at him, his legs turned to jelly and he slumped down onto the floor, crying, "Don't kill me, please don't kill me."

"You traitor, begging is useless," Wang Shishi said as she tried to

avoid eye contact with him.

If it had been Huo Dong, he would have known that Wang Shishi looked strong on the outside, but was a softie inside. She would probably have let him go if he'd won her affection. However, Sun Xiaowu was not Huo Dong, and he did not know how to read body language. Instead of begging for mercy, he cursed, "You son of a bitch! If I become a ghost, I'll come back and haunt both you and Luo Yuan! You will both suffer!"

"You... you're going to die!" He had not just cursed Wang Shishi, but also Brother Luo. Wang Shishi was so angry she trembled and the shuttle exploded with a bang, breaking through the sound barrier. In just a second, Sun Xiaowu's head had burst into pieces and brain juice had splattered in all directions.

Wang Shishi's face turned pale as she was covered in blood. She suddenly felt her stomach contract violently, and she had to lean against the wall and retch while tears spilled down her face.

Luo Yuan, on the other hand, had almost put an end to his fight.

When the man in the suit had used up all his bullets, he threw the rifle away, took out a military knife fast from his back and threw himself towards Luo Yuan.

His speed was faster than average and after being trained into combat for a long period of time, he had relatively high combat efficiency. However, Luo Yuan was still better. He quickly took a few steps forward, swished his Zhanmadao and cut the man's

military knife. Without waiting for his reaction, he swished the Zhanmadao again and had cut through the main artery on the man's neck.

Abundant blood oozed out, painting part of the wall red.

Although the fight had seemed long, the whole battle had actually taken only about 10 seconds.

“Ma Lian, run!” Brother Hei hissed. He had completely lost his confidence in the face of Luo Yuan. He had expected a fight, not a complete massacre.

Deng Chao was very strong, but he was uncertain that he could win the fight. After all, Luo Yuan could easily kill people who were strong and highly competent. Zhou Zhongming was a member of the special forces; he was very capable at fighting, even better than other evolved people if he had gun, but he could not resist either. Bullets were totally useless.

Desperation, it was complete desperation.

As his howl still echoed around the corridor, Ma Lian cried in anguish. There was a flash of light and a head flew up high, blood oozing out as if from a spring.

Brother Hei could not hold back his emotions anymore and run desperately out of the there. His evolution was related to speed, so he sprinted to save his life. Even Luo Yuan was surprised. He was

caught off his guard for a moment before he ran out of the corridor.

“Wang Shishi and Huang Jiahui are in danger.”

Luo Yuan’s heart missed a beat as he quickly went after the man.

Chapter 119: The Pulse Of The Earth

Brother Hei was running for his life. He was so afraid, he'd almost gone mad. He felt the danger get closer as that guy ran after him. What drove him crazy was his opponent's speed, which was even faster than his. It was total desperation to meet a stronger enemy.

He ran along the corridor and sprinted towards the door without looking back.

The fear in his heart did not allow him to notice Wang Shishi, who was vomiting nearby. He could not have managed to react even if he had seen her anyway.

Not every evolved person was like Luo Yuan, who could develop his attributes in a balanced way. Most evolved people had strong powers, but also had weak points. His speed may have been as fast as Luo Yuan's, but he did not have a high battle efficiency, a competent brain or the strong sensory perception to process the large amount of information during a high-speed fight.

It was like a non-professional driving a racing car. He could probably race on a highway, but not be able to make a U-turn or overtake.

In fact, after Luo Yuan had become an evolved person, he had had to reduce his speed at about 50% when he fought so his battle efficiency wouldn't decrease.

A few steps later, Brother Hei was about to reach the door. As soon as he got out of the villa, he saw the young woman in black semi-crouching about 30 meters away. She was holding a silver-white handgun tightly in both hands and pointing it toward him while she swayed from left and right.

A chill suddenly shocked his spine. He glowered and growled. With the driving force of a man about to get killed, he sped up toward the young woman. He knew perfectly well that if he did not get himself a hostage to control the terrifying man behind him, he would not be able to survive.

“Jiahui, run!” Luo Yuan shouted in alarm.

Huang Jiahui did not seem to hear him as she remained still. Cold sweat ran down her forehead as she watched the enemy get closer fast. Her pupils contracted while she pointed the gun at the vague shadow.

The distance between them was getting shorter very quickly.

Thirty meters, twenty-five meters, twenty meters...

Huang Jiahui finally pulled the trigger.

Bang! Bang! Bang!

The first shot missed, but the second shot grazed his arm, drawing blood, and the third one hit him right on the chest. The

dark blue rank bullet had an extremely strong penetrating force. It got through his chest and penetrated a couple of walls before finally disappearing. It left quite a few holes in the villa.

Brother Hei's body jerked, stumbled and flew into the air by the force of his speed. A ferocious look of disappointment flashed across his face as he took out a handgun from his waist, raised his head and pulled the trigger in Huang Jiahui's direction.

"No!" Luo Yuan was shocked as he threw his Zhanmadao towards Brother Hei.

It was too late though. A gunshot sounded out just as the Zhanmadao struck his chest.

At such a dangerous moment, nobody would have thought that a shadow would suddenly appear and throw itself upon Huang Jianhui, letting the bullet hit their body instead. Blood splattered all around.

It was Huang Yuying.

Luo Yuan was shocked. He had never thought that Huang Yuying would do such a thing.

Noticing that somebody had gotten injured, everyone ran over.

Luo Yuan pulled his Zhanmadao out of the man's body. He was not dead yet, but blood was oozing out of his mouth and he could

no longer talk. He gave Luo Yuan an imploring look, hoping that he would take pity on him and end his life fast.

Luo Yuan swished his knife emotionlessly and finished him.

Then he quickly rushed over to Huang Yuying, who was partially lying on the floor, her hand pressing on her stomach while blood oozed out through her fingers. They were dyed a deep red.

Huang Jiahui was holding her hand tightly, her eyes full of tears. She felt thankful and ashamed at the same time. She kept murmuring, "Please hold on! Why were you so stupid? You didn't have to save me."

Huang Yuying's face was very pale, but she gave her a forceful smile and said weakly, "I... I owed this to all of you. I couldn't do much, all I could do... was this. If I die, please go to Wugou County in Shannan Province and check if my parents are still alive. My dad's name is Huang Weimin, and my mom's is..."

She started spitting up blood before she could finish her sentence.

"Don't worry, you won't die. We'll all go together." Realizing that she was going to die soon, she turned and shouted at Ning Xiaoran, "Save her, quick!"

She died eventually.

Ning Xiaoran was just a nurse. She could not perform surgery. Besides, the bullet had gone through her stomach and caused profuse bleeding. Considering the lack of sufficient medical supplies, it was impossible to treat such a serious injury.

The ashes in front of the villa had yet to decompose, so a new fire was started on them.

Life was unpredictable, especially during the apocalypse.

Luo Yuan had not liked Huang Yuying. She had made a very bad impression on him right from the beginning. Even though she was a beautiful woman, Luo Yuan had never been nice to her. He had even had the urge to kill her. However, she had been willing to sacrifice her life to save someone she had known for less than half a month.

Human nature was complicated. Nobody could predict what would happen next.

Huang Jiahui was in a bad mood after the incident. She was quiet for days and abused herself by training intensely. She held her gun horizontally for several hours on end until she was so tired, she fell asleep as soon as her head hit the pillow. Luo Yuan did not stop her or encourage her, even though he knew about it.

After all, this was normal during such hard times. The relaxing attitude that they'd had so far had been abnormal.

This battle had changed most of them, especially Wang Shishi.

Killing a person might sound simple, but it was difficult for the soul to bear. A killer sees people differently than the average person. They despise normal people, and serial killers usually see them as animals.

Wang Shishi was not an adult and she had not formed a stable worldview yet. Other than some fear and discomfort at the beginning, she got over it pretty quickly after a few comforting talks. It was faster than Luo Yuan had expected.

What made him delighted was that, after killing a man, her willpower seemed to have been strengthened and her telekinetic power had become stronger. She could now carry things up to 50 kg and her shuttle could easily break the sound barrier and exert even greater power.

Luo Yuan had not remained idle either. Ever since he had evolved, he had stopped hunting in order to practice his special ability.

His Earth Stomp power was related to his sensory perception and strength. Besides training his strength, Luo Yuan would spend a lot of time standing on the grass quietly and enjoying the indescribable feeling that the Earth gave him.

Through his ability as an evolved person, he could use his sensory perception to 'see' into the deeper part of the Earth, which was a whole different world.

Grass had a very developed underground root network and could spread up to a few square meters of space. Numerous roots intertwined together and formed an airtight network, which provided a habitat for various bizarre mutated organisms.

As his sensory perception kept expanding, the images in his mind gradually became more vague and unclear.

Then strangely, he thought he felt the Earth's slow rotation that never stopped or changed.

It was an indescribably immense power, and it left him in awe for a moment.

After feeling it for a while, he retreated and started to speculate.

The pulse he had felt could have been described as an earthquake. He had felt the Earth shake while he had been feeling the rotation. However, he could not confirm that that's what it was, because there were various types of Earth movement besides earthquakes-tides, volcano eruptions, nuclear explosions, even the slightest vibration caused by the movement of a mutated beast.

Furthermore, among all these quaking frequencies, some were clear and powerful while others were weak and unidentifiable. Some frequencies were consistent while others were not.

However, Luo Yuan was guessing that there would only be one

main frequency representing the Earth's real pulse. The question was how to differentiate between them.

After a few days of experiencing this, he discovered that the pulse of the Earth was neither the clearest nor the weakest, and a small earthquake of a 2 to 3 magnitude could cover it completely.

He considered many possibilities. He even thought of using the 24 hours of the Earth's rotation as an interval to test the frequency of the pulse, but to no avail.

The pulse of the Earth seemed to come from the core of the Earth. It was a faster, hidden frequency.

Time flew while he tried to comprehend the Earth. Luo Yuan looked at the time and realized that it was close to dusk. He shook his head. He had to go back, but when he raised his right foot, he felt it cling to the Earth, a terrifying power pulling him toward it tightly. His heart suddenly missed a beat and started throbbing.

The incident shocked him and he consciously exerted all his energy. His forehead was roped with prominent veins as if he was trying to carry the whole Earth on his shoulders, yet he could only raise his foot about 2 to 3 feet high before he could no longer resist the force and stomped his right leg on the ground.

Bang!

There was a loud noise.

It felt like the surface of the ground in a 50-meter radius had exploded. Numerous weeds, gravel, and some mutated organisms living underground flew up into the air. The mutated organisms burst into a bloody mist before they fell to the ground.

After a few seconds, the loud noise of the explosion began to subside. Other than the small area where he stood, the whole area looked like it had been ploughed and the soil and weeds looked like sand mixed with some green.

Looking at what had happened, Luo Yuan was shocked. Even a slow learner would have know what had just happened.

“Earth Stomp... This is the Earth Stomp!” he murmured, unable to hold back his shock.

“If low-rank mutated beasts could not resist it at all, perhaps light blue beasts would not be able to escape its power either.”

The explanation provided by the system regarding the Earth Stomp power was rather vague, so he had thought that it was just a secondary power with a weak attacking power. Luo Yuan had tried his best to understand it these past few days because he thought that it could cause a certain degree of dizziness, and thus might help him attack and kill his enemies.

However, he had not expected the third level Earth Stomp to have such a horrific attacking power. It was like an extreme meat-mincing machine.

“The dizziness effect has to apply to blue rank or dark blue rank beasts as normal beasts would have been crashed.”

He was excited for a quite while before he finally calmed down, thinking, “This time it was triggered by luck, but there has to be a second time. I have to find its trigger pattern.”

The power was extremely strong. If he could fully master it, his strength would get even bigger and he could turn this into his best weapon.

Chapter 120: Anxie District

The blood and flesh that had been all over the floor two days ago had been cleaned, but Luo Yuan could still smell its faint odor.

Dinner had been prepared and placed on the table. Luo Yuan put down his Zhanmadao and took a seat.

His rice bowl had been filled just in time. He was famished. He grabbed a pair of chopsticks, picked up a mutated beast internal organ and devoured it.

These days, his appetite had been increasing thanks to his intense training. His previously stagnant strength had slowly been rising. On the whole, 13-point Energy was the human limit. Even if someone were to undergo intense training, they would still not reach that level of power.

This had nothing to do with talent or different training techniques. It was all about body size.

If a 75 kg man and a 150 kg man underwent the same training, their strength and power would vary greatly, and most of that difference would be because of their weight. For someone with Luo Yuan's body, 12-point Strength was pretty close to the limit, regardless of how many methods they used to surpass it.

The reason for such growth was the evolution process.

Shortly after he had started eating, a few sheets of paper drifted in through the open doorway.

"The wind blew them in," Wang Shi Shi said plainly.

Luo Yuan took a look and discovered that the papers looked new, as if they had just been printed. They did not look like waste papers that had simply been wafted in by a gust of wind. Puzzled, he put down his rice bowl, walked over and picked one up. His face suddenly changed. "They're flyers!"

"What kind of flyers?" Huang Jiahui asked.

"Take a look!" Luo Yuan handed it over.

"Announcement to all Chinese citizens!"

Our fellow countrymen, the current situation is becoming increasingly serious. The central government has no choice but to temporarily abandon all central-east districts within the capital and proceed to a nationwide retreat. This is the only way to preserve mankind's strength and avoid a greater loss for the future of the human race. The government is unable to dispatch any more manpower to fallen areas for search and rescue.

If there are any lucky survivors reading these flyers, please spread the news and consider them thoroughly!

The National Emergency Committee"

Huang Jiahui read each word carefully, her face turning pale.

Luo Yuan picked up another flyer and read it carefully. On its back was a picture of the world map, marked with a variety of colors. Most of the regions had been painted black, and some areas had been marked with red. Only the West, with its low population and inhabitable climate, had been marked yellow.

The whole Jiangnan Province was black. A fallen zone.

As if he had suddenly thought of something, Huo Dong ran excitedly towards the doorway and shouted, "A plane! The flyers must have been distributed by plane!"

Luo Yuan was startled, but he quickly ran out and joined Huo Dong.

A silver-white dot could be seen hovering in the sky while stacks of flyers were flying everywhere.

"Here! We're here! There are survivors here!" Huo Dong shouted, waving his hands like crazy.

Soon everyone started shouting until their voices went hoarse.

"They can't hear us, let's use smoke! Chen Xianfeng, go to the basement and bring out the diesel!" Luo Yuan shouted.

"It's useless! What if it's an unmanned aircraft?" Huang Jiahui could not help but say.

Everyone seemed to not have heard her. Chen Xianfeng quickly ran to the storage room and brought out a bucket of diesel. Luo Yuan took it from him, unscrewed the cap, poured a large amount onto the ground, and lit it up. When it did not produce the thick smoke that he had wanted it to, Luo Yuan shouted, "Get some wet firewood!"

When the firewood was thrown in, a thick dark smoke started to rise.

They stood in silence for a long time, watching the smoke billow towards the sky.

At night, Luo Yuan tossed and turned. He just could not seem to fall asleep. The black markings of death on the flyers kept flashing in his mind, causing him stress and insomnia.

The city had gradually been shrouded in green. As long as there was a tiny bit of soil, plants grew at an alarming speed. Many areas had turned into jungle, where plants grew vigorously. Grass had also begun to emerge in between the cracks of the concrete floor.

When Luo Yuan had been in high school, he had read an essay about a wildflower growing by a cliff. The essay had praised the perseverance of the wildflower for thriving and flourishing under such extreme conditions. At the time, the story had seemed dull,

but now he found himself feeling both fear and awe.

As soon as the green covered the whole city, the erosion of the roots would speed up the extinction of the human race, and soon the whole city would disintegrate and become ruins within a forest.

"Why don't we head towards the West?" Huang Jiahui suddenly said.

"Did I wake you?" Luo Yuan asked.

"I could not fall asleep either," Huang Jiahui said, suddenly turning and hugging Luo Yuan. She placed her head on his chest before she added, "We can't keep living like this. Why don't we leave this place?"

That was the second time that Huang Jiahui had raised that topic. In their previous conversation, Luo Yuan had rejected the idea. This time he remained silent.

After a long time, he said in a low voice, "It's very dangerous outside. People may die. Perhaps none of us will even make it half way there."

"We may die, but we can't stay here forever. I don't want our future children to be raised here. As long as there is a glimmer of hope, we shouldn't give up," Huang Jiahui said softly, embracing Luo Yuan tightly.

Luo Yuan was startled. He almost jumped up from the bed. “Are you pregnant?”

He had never considered having a child. He felt like a high school student whose girlfriend had just told him that she was pregnant. His first reaction was not happiness, but fear. This was all too sudden.

After observing Luo Yuan’s reaction, Huang Jiahui let out a quiet sigh.

She knew that they were together because of sex, not love. She had been married and given birth to a child. Although she was considered a beauty, that still did not mean anything. Luo Yuan could have even the most beautiful of women at his feet. In fact, if Luo Yuan wanted to, he could go to any of the women’s beds and not be turned away.

As long as they were together, she could not ask for more. Nonetheless, she could not help but feel sad. She forced a smile. “Look how scared you are. I said our future children.”

Luo Yuan realized that he had overreacted, so he said apologetically, “I did not mean it that way. It’s just that now is not a good time to get pregnant. It would be too harsh for the child. They’d have to face this cruel world the minute they were born.”

The idea stirred his heart. After all, they could not stay there all their lives. Sooner or later, they would have to leave. Hedong City

was getting increasingly dangerous; the larger mutated beasts could undergo evolution any time. Staying there might not be safe anymore.

He closed his eyes, struggling for a moment. Then he took a deep breath and with a heavy heart, he said, "Then let's head west. We will depart in a few days."

A silhouette was running at high speed down an empty street.

Luo Yuan jumped across a half-fallen building on the road, and kept running forward. He had been sprinting nonstop for an hour, but his 16-point Physique would not allow him to get tired. His body was at optimum condition all the time.

Suddenly, he came to a stop. He was holding a tattered map and looking around carefully, comparing the area to the picture. Various landmarks had collapsed, and several streets had been blocked. Even with the map, it was difficult to name the location. Luo Yuan stood there, looking around for a long time before confirming that this was Huayuan Street of the Dongguang District. There was still some distance to go before reaching the Anxie Gaoshang Community.

A few days ago Luo Yuan had been so stressed, he had almost forgotten something. It was only when he was about to leave that he remembered receiving a text message from Wang Xianguang.

Perhaps the person that you ignored the most was the one that cared about you the most. Luo Yuan had always harbored guilt

towards that girl. Before leaving Hedong City, he had finally decided to check on her.

In order to avoid attracting a mutated beast, he had not brought his giant lizard. Instead, he had come alone.

He suddenly realized that the situation there was very bad. This had once been an affluent area with a beautiful environment, full of parks and greenery. Although all trees had been eradicated before the fall of Hedong City, the plants were flourishing with even more vigor than before, and the large canal that snaked through the district made it even more dangerous.

His heart gradually sank. Compared to Dongguan District, the place that Luo Yuan stayed in seemed like a safe heaven.

He could not pinpoint the exact level of mutated beasts, but they had to be several times more powerful than the underground worm he had encountered. He had never felt such a terrifying aura before.

Mutated beasts had finally started to evolve, yet no one knew how many exactly had evolved in the entire Hedong City.

Luo Yuan was affected by the strange aura. His heart got tense, and he became more careful. He kept away from the area as he compared the streets to the map. About an hour later, he finally arrived at Anxie District.

The electric gate looked as if it had been hit by something. It had flown ten meters away and been twisted into hemp-like rolls.

Although this had once been a high-end area, it was hardly recognizable anymore. Plants were forming a dense, airtight forest, and the roars of mutated beasts could be heard in the distance. A group of mutated insects that looked like they belonged in prehistoric times was flying up and down through the woods.

The road on the ground had been buried completely under the grass; there was not even the slightest trace of concrete. Except for several vine-covered high-rise apartment buildings that could still be seen towering over the woods, the rest of the buildings had been completely covered by trees.

It looked more like a virgin forest than a community park.

Luo Yuan's heart felt heavy. He hoped that Wang Xianguang was still alive.

Chapter 121: Meeting Again

Luo Yuan moved the tussock aside and finally found a trace of the road. The path, which was made of cobblestones and cement, had been eroded by the roots and had almost turned into soil. If the cobblestones had not still been there and the color of the disintegrated cement had not been different from the soil, he could not have distinguished the original path from the land.

He kept chopping away the branches blocking his way while he slowly walked towards the heart of the district. Soon, he saw the first house. He could not see its number as the whole building was wrapped in layers of vines and branches, and every surface was covered in moss and lichen.

Several black snakes as thin as chopsticks were wreathing on the strong vines, hissing and flicking out their forked tongues.

Luo Yuan took a look around before he stepped onto the high weeds and slowly walked towards the villa. Thanks to the oppressing aura spreading from him, the black snakes and mutated beasts hiding around the building quickly run away. The area in a 10-meter radius around him suddenly became very quiet.

Luo Yuan took out his Zhanmadao and chopped off the branches wrapping around the villa.

The building was filled with cracks and the cement was dropping off. If it was not for the vines supporting it, the villa would have already collapsed.

“Number 5. This is the fifth villa. Wang Xianguang’s message said that it was number 18. If the buildings are in numeric order, it should be somewhere further inside,” Luo Yuan thought.

He sped up and passed by a few more buildings. The houses were all wrapped in layers of plants, their formerly luxurious exterior no longer visible. His oppressing aura was released continuously, so no mutated beast dared go near him.

Meanwhile, he kept checking the numbers on the buildings. Two hours later, he finally found Villa Number 18.

Luo Yuan was slightly nervous. He took a deep breath, and chopped off the vines by the entrance, revealing the collapsed door. As he walked into the villa, a strong moldy smell hit him. The walls were filled with spider-like cracks, and all the wooden furniture was in a state of decay. Marble surfaces were covered by moss, and even the ceiling light fixtures had grass growing around them. The place looked like it had not been inhabited by anyone in centuries.

Luo Yuan used his Sensory Perception to get an accurate picture of the underground condition of the villa. His heart sank.

Nobody. There was nobody there at all.

His 14-point Sensory Perception helped him sense everything up to a 50-meter radius, even underground. Provided that he was not blocked by any metal or ore, he could sense things up to 10 meters

deep.

As long as he used his Sensory Perception, nothing around the villa could escape his senses.

Yet he could see nothing. There was a basement, but it was too small, and it had mainly been used as a winery. There was nothing, not even any useful supplies. It seemed that they had taken everything with them when they'd left.

Luo Yuan knew that Wang Xianguang's message had been sent long ago, prior to the attacks from large groups of animals and mutated mosquitoes. Anything could have happened within such a long period of time.

Her family was rich and they could solve most problems with money. Therefore, it would not be surprising if they'd moved to some underground base.

"Hold on, something seems to be wrong." Luo Yuan finally recalled that the base was not owned solely by Wang Xianguang's dad, but had been built in collaboration with a few of his friends. Therefore, it might not be under his villa, but somewhere else.

During the apocalypse, the inflation rate had been so great that most things were too expensive for people to afford, and certain types of goods had been listed as regulated products as a war strategy. Therefore, the average millionaire would not be able to afford to build an underground base.

His leg accidentally tripped on something. He lowered his head to take a look, and picked the object up. It was a broken picture frame. The picture inside it was blurred, but Luo Yuan could roughly recognize Wang Xianguang.

He thought of Wang Xianguang's character and the last message he had received. He felt moved as he walked briskly to the second floor. With the help of his Sensory Perception, he kicked open the door of the bedroom that he thought had belonged to Wang Xianguang. That's when he saw it. A thin, transparent plastic sheet with a piece of paper inside it. It was on the table beside the bed, anchored by a paperweight.

Luo Yuan picked it up and opened it. The wording was beautiful and neat. It was her handwriting.

"I've waited for you for a few days, but you have neither come nor replied. I tried calling you, but I discovered that your phone has been turned off.

How are you?

The mutated mosquitoes have been killing a lot of people lately. Everyone is panicked and many have decided to go to the underground base to seek refuge. My family and I are going, too. That's why I'm leaving you this message, so you can still find us when you come.

I've been missing you so much lately. I miss you every day. I'm worried about you, and I'm praying to goddess Guanyin that

you're safe.

The entrance to the base is drawn on the back of this paper. Maybe this piece of paper won't last forever, but I still wanted to write it down in hope that a miracle would happen.”

After Luo Yuan finished reading, he stood there for a long time, feeling torn. Then he carefully put the letter back into the small plastic sheet and took it with him.

He picked up his Zhanmadao and rushed out.

The entrance was under a pavilion at the central part of the district garden. However, the pavilion had turned into ruins, and it took Luo Yuan about an hour to find it between the dense bushes.

He removed all the weeds and pebbles until a metal 1.5 meter-diameter cover was exposed. He used his Sensory Perception and discovered that there were about 100 people hiding underneath. Luo Yuan could not tell which one was Wang Xianguang, but he believed that she was there.

He pulled off the metal cover and a cement staircase was revealed.

The stairs looked quite humid and there were several blood stains on them. Obviously, something had happened there.

At the end of the 30-step long staircase, there was a thick,

stainless steel door. The defense measures were quite tight. Luo Yuan sensed that there were three such doors, each 30 centimeters thick.

He pulled out his Zhanmadao, but put it back seconds later. He realized destroying their door would not be a wise move. Such an action might enrage them, especially considering the hard times they were all going through.

Instead, he used the holder of the knife to knock on the door hard. A few minutes later, there was a loud noise that sounded like two metals striking against each other, and two pairs of small speakers appeared at the door. Luo Yuan was surprised.

“How did you get here? Why are you here?”

Luo Yuan realized there also had to be a hidden camera.

“I’m looking for someone. I wanted to ask if Wang Xiaguang is inside. She’s in her twenties, 1.65 meters tall-”

“There’s no one like that here,” the man interrupted him impatiently.

“Are you sure? Maybe you don't know her. Why don't you ask someone else?” Luo Yuan’s heart beat fast.

“What’s wrong with you? I’ve already told you no. Go away, we’re not going to open the door,” the man said impatiently.

Even though Luo Yuan wanted to stay out of trouble, he could not help but get angry. He stared at the camera ferociously as he said, “I’m asking again, is there someone like that in there?”

The man seemed shocked. He replied after a while in a better tone, “It’s useless to ask again. I’ve been here for a long time and I’ve never heard of a woman called Wang Xianguang.”

Luo Yuan could not believe it. He dared not believe it. “Open the door, I want to see it for myself,” he said in a low voice.

“We won’t open the door, no matter what you say. Please go away,” the man said.

“Then I’ll open it myself.” Luo Yuan shook his head. He had not expected that he would have to resort to violence. He took out his Zhanmadao, inserted it into the door, and cut the lock off. Then he pulled the door open by force, ready to open the second door.

The man had thought that Luo Yuan was just joking, but when he saw him open the first door as easily as cutting tofu, he shouted, “Stop, please stop! I’ll get someone to open the door now!”

Luo Yuan sneered. He stopped and stepped back a little.

Ten minutes later, ten men came out. As soon as the second metal door was pulled open, ten guns were pointed directly at Luo Yuan. Their leader was an arrogant, tall young guy wearing a

tailored suit.

He was completely unarmed as he walked up to Luo Yuan and said slyly, “Why don't you take the easy road to heaven instead of the difficult road to hell? Your knife looks good. I'll have it as compensation for destroying our door.”

“We'll talk about compensation later. Someone said that Wang Xianguang is no longer here. Do you happen to know where she is?” Luo Yuan looked very calm despite the fact that he was surrounded by guns.

The young man clapped admiringly and said with confidence, “I don't believe you are really that calm, but since you have come all the way here, I will tell you. The b*tch is dying as we speak. I've been starving her for three days, but she's still not giving up. Why is that whole family so stubborn? It really puts me in an uncomfortable position.”

Luo Yuan's face darkened and a terrifying aura broke out uncontrollably from him. The strong, intimidating aura twisted the air surrounding him. Everyone felt oppressed and had difficulty breathing. Cold sweat dripped down their foreheads.

The young guy got scared, but realizing he had more men, he calmed down again. He shook his head and said, “So you want to put up a fight.”

With a gloomy expression, Luo Yuan walked slowly up to him while a sheer layer of Willpower membrane formed on his skin. He

smirked as he said, “Idiot.”

Watching him walk over aggressively, the young guy shouted, “Fire!”

His voice was still echoing out when warm, fresh blood splashed on his face. The man nearest to him had pressed on his throat and pulled the trigger instinctively.

Bang! Bang! Bang!

Numerous bullets were flying around the narrow space, causing some rather unlucky men to die.

The men’s shooting accuracy was very poor.

One of them was about to shoot when he realized that Luo Yuan had disappeared from where he’d been standing. Suddenly, he felt a cold breeze on his back and before he could react, he felt something cold go through his head, followed by a burning hot feeling. The most excruciating pain he had ever experienced spread through his whole body. He tried to scream in anguish, but he could not.

Before the man could slump down on the floor, Luo Yuan had disappeared again.

The narrow space was packed, so the men didn’t have much space to move. Luo Yuan managed to decapitate five people in the

blink of an eye. Blood was oozing out like a spring from the necks of the five headless bodies, frightening the rest of them.

Each time he swished his knife, someone fell dead. After all, these were just normal people. They might have guns, but their fighting skills were a lot worse than Luo Yuan's.

Besides, they had been hiding in the underground base, and thus had been out of contact with the outside world for a long period of time. As a result, they did not know that humans could have such abilities.

They did not even have enough time to aim. Luo Yuan was too fast. He seemed not to stay in the same place for more than a second after he killed each man. Extreme fear caused a mental breakdown among the men. Bullets were shooting in all directions, causing only more death on their side.

The whole corridor looked like a slaughtering chamber. Seeing his men fall one after the other, the young man's courage and confidence soon collapsed like a weak building. His face turned pale as he tried desperately to run back inside.

Luo Yuan sprinted past him, turning his knife to cut through his stomach. His intestines came out instantly. The young man screamed loudly and slumped down on the floor, trying to put his intestines back in while he screamed in anguish.

Luo Yuan was not a cruel man, but he was infuriated.

He glimpsed at the young man and then he turned away. He walked quickly inside, hearing agonizing screams and curses from behind him.

The people inside the base had heard the noise outside and were all hiding in their rooms. Though some braver ones looked at Luo Yuan from their doorways, they closed the doors as soon as Luo Yuan looked back at them. He might as well have been the devil.

The base was huge. It was a five-meter tall area of millions of square meters. An enormous effort must have been made to build it. The whole area was lit up and there were many different facilities such as an entertainment room, a library, a gym, a shooting field. There was even a dancing room and a sauna. Luo Yuan felt odd being there.

These people were too comfortable. They didn't have the slightest idea about what was going on outside.

Luo Yuan walked past quickly. He did not feel like observing all the details. His Sensory Perception kept sensing the condition of each room. Suddenly, he walked to the front of a wooden door, took out the Zhanmadao and cut the door open.

He pushed it and entered the room. He was shocked to find Wang Xianguang lying on a bed motionless. She looked rather ill and her face, which had once been plump, had become very thin. When Luo Yuan realized that her chest was still moving up and down slightly, he felt relieved.

He tried to carry her, but Wang Xiaguang sensed that someone was holding her and began to struggle intensely. She opened her eyes, stupefied.

For a moment, she thought she was hallucinating. Everything seemed so unreal. She wanted to touch his face, but she hesitated.

Luo Yuan felt sad as he comforted her, "It's alright, everything's alright."

"Am I dreaming?" Wang Xiaguang asked. She sounded like she was talking in her sleep.

"Try pinching yourself," Luo Yuan said.

Wang Xiaguang shook her head. She stared at him as she said lightly, "I heard that people hallucinate before they die. I'm afraid if I realize this is a hallucination, it will end instantly."

Luo Yuan eyes were a bit moistened, but he was smiling wholeheartedly, "You're so stupid. This is not a dream. It's the real me coming for you."

Wang Xiaguang smiled weakly. Her eyelids were getting heavier, as if she was sleepy.

Luo Yuan was shocked. She had not eaten anything in a long time, and struggling just now must have taken up the last bit of her energy. Luo Yuan could feel her breathing getting weaker.

He stood up and kicked open a nearby door. A middle-aged couple screamed loudly and offered all their food before he could threaten them.

Luo Yuan just took a bottle of water and a can of mixed congee. When he got back to the room, Wang Xiaguang was almost asleep.

“Hold on, you must not sleep. You have to eat something.” Luo Yuan opened the mixed congee, scooped it up with a spoon and put it into her mouth.

She had just a few mouthfuls before she gradually fell silent. She had fallen asleep.

Luo Yuan was very worried about her condition. She might not be able to wake up from her sleep. Normal food would definitely not have a significant effect on her body. He needed high-level mutated beast flesh, but he could not find some in such a short time.

Then he suddenly had an idea. Maybe his blood would do. His body attributes were upgrading continuously and his body rank was supposed to be about the same as that of light blue rank mutated beasts. If he added in all his secondary attributes such as Willpower, Sensory Perception and Intelligence, his total attribute points were actually much higher than the giant lizard's.

He was a man-shaped mutated beast.

As he thought about that, he took out the Zhanmadao and, without hesitation, cut his wrist lightly. Blood quickly dropped onto Wang Xianguang's cracked lips, and she swallowed it unconsciously.

His blood was like concentrated plasma, much thicker than the average man's. As a result, it would coagulate easily and wounds would stop bleeding quickly.

Luo Yuan had to cut his wrist many times, creating many wounds on his skin.

After about ten minutes, Wang Xianguang's cheeks gradually regained their color and her breathing stabilized. Luo Yuan was relieved.

Suddenly, he noticed a few people standing outside the door, looking hesitant to enter.

Chapter 122: The Mutated Man

After making sure that Wang Xianguang was alright, Luo Yuan picked up his sword and walked out of the room.

The five people that had arrived looked pretty old. The oldest one was 67 years old while the youngest was 34. Compared to normal people, the five of them looked considerably more mature. As they watched Luo Yuan come out, the men maintained their composure, although they still looked kind of uneasy.

None of them had wanted to come and face the cold-blooded killer. They had been forced to. Originally, the murder of Wang Xianguang's family had been approved by all parties, but now they would have to pay the price for it.

"You and Wang Hongbiao are from East Lake City, right?" one of the old men asked, trying to force a warm smile.

Luo Yuan sneered, "Cut the crap. Have you come here to die?"

Maintaining the same expression, the old man exhaled a sigh of relief. As long as there was no violence, everything would be alright. The scariest ones were those who killed like madmen without saying anything. With a smile, he took a short, respectful bow and carefully said, "We only hoped that you would not kill innocent people. There must be some kind of misunderstanding!"

"Misunderstanding?" Luo Yuan snorted. He scanned the crowd. This group of people had to be the investors of the base.

Although he had a few guesses about their secrets, the truth about to be revealed would still shock him.

“Yes, a misunderstanding!” the old man sighed, his eyes flashing with a trace of fear. “Wang Hongbiao is our friend. Although some of us only met recently, most of us have known each other very long and have done business together before. We all know each other. Even though our friendship may not be a deep one, we still consider each other as a friend.”

“This small base had been in the works for a long time. It had been designed to act as an escape route for our people. We thought it was going to be a while before we truly needed it. We had not expected it to be this soon.”

“When we first moved here, everything was normal. However, gradually, we started to notice some weird changes in Wang Hongbiao. He fed on raw meat; at first he was discreet, but then he started to feed in front of people. His appetite grew enormous, and soon he was consuming up to several pounds of meat a day. He looked unstable, sometimes even crazy. The way he looked at people had also changed. Come to think of it, he was looking at them like they were food.”

“Although we felt strange, we didn’t put much thought into it. We had heard the rumors about evolution, and we thought he was one of those people. As time passed, people in the base started to go missing. Their number increased as the days went by.

“One of them was the father of the man you just killed, Shen Shao Chong. People started to get worried, afraid that they would be next. When we finally performed a thorough investigation and set up surveillance cameras in every corner, we found him in a bloodied bathroom, tearing apart a corpse and eating it like a crazy beast.”

“He had become so strong, that even bullets did not have much of an effect on him. Only when one of the dying victims accidentally tore through his clothes, did we see that a part of his body was covered in scales. Even though we eventually had him killed, seven to eight lives had already been lost.”

It wasn't a bad story.

When Luo Yuan heard that Wang Hongbiao had grown scales on his body, his expression changed and became doubtful. Was this a failed evolution? The idea flashed across his mind as he coldly asked, "Is that your explanation?"

The old man sighed, but didn't speak.

Even though he said nothing, Luo Yuan could guess that the hatred of the people had led them to take revenge on Wang Hongbiao's wife and daughter. Luo Yuan never underestimated the evil of human nature. Looking at the group of people, his hands tightened on his sword, ready to kill.

The crowd held their breath as their faces turned pale and their hearts began to beat fast. A few of them had quietly reached into

pockets for their handguns. Out of the corner of his eye, Luo Yuan saw several men with guns emerge, preparing for the worst.

"How did Wang Xiaguang's mother die?" Luo Yuan suddenly said. The room went silent for a while.

"Maybe she had heard the news and didn't want to wait for us to take action. She committed suicide on that very night," the old man said, swallowing hard.

‘Wang Xiaguang?’

"We didn't touch her either. Shen Shao Chong wanted her to kneel before him, but she stubbornly refused. We had cleared the issue, so we didn't think that Shen Shao Chong would go to such extremes." As a man he naturally understood what Luo Yuan had meant earlier.

A dead person could hardly ever defend themselves. Luo Yuan knew that there had to be others involved too. They could not be as innocent as they claimed to be. But what was the point in insisting on learning the truth? Killing more people? Or killing everyone in the base?

At least Wang Xiaguang was still alive. He had never met her parents nor did their deaths cause him any sad feelings. There was nothing he could do about it. Feeling exhausted, he waved his hand. "Leave now, before I kill you all."

The crowd quickly dispersed with a sigh of relief, only to realize their backs had been sweating profusely all this time.

"Wait!" Luo Yuan suddenly called out.

The people were surprised. Some of them nearly took off, but in the end they all remained still. Fighting back his fear, the old man, turned around and said respectfully, "Young brother, if there's anything you want, please tell us. As long as we have it, it's yours. Money, gold, diamonds, food... Resources are not a problem."

Perhaps these things held great appeal for normal people, but for Luo Yuan, who was about to leave East Lake City, such useless items would only be a burden.

All along the journey, Luo Yuan had not intended to bring much, not even food. If anything, it would not fit into his vehicle. Plus, even though they were in the city, most roads had been closed down, thus most of the things would have to be thrown away.

"I'm not interested in anything like that. Is Wang Hongbiao's body still here?" Luo Yuan asked.

The changes on Wang Hongbiao's body had piqued his curiosity.

The old man hesitated for a moment, glancing at the crowd reluctantly. Even if he didn't speak, one of them would. Finally, he admitted, "Yes, it's inside the freezer in the laboratory."

"The laboratory?" Luo Yuan said.

Most of the people living in this affluent district, apart from the few wealthy families, were intelligent elite from Donghu City. Apart from the few famous people sent to work in the government underground base, there were several unknown, highly-paid staff that had stayed on. Some of them were departmental staff involved in innovative experiments.

"Show me," Luo Yuan said, indifferent to the crowd's fear.

The laboratory was almost bare. There was very little equipment; most of it just test tubes and chemical agents. Even to an outsider like Luo Yuan, the facility looked poorly equipped.

He understood why. Business trade in Hedong City had long stopped, thus most resources were being heavily regulated. Even the richest citizens couldn't afford to equip a research facility.

Until Luo Yuan's arrival a minute ago, there had been no one inside the laboratory.

A frightened researcher dressed in a laboratory coat was dragged in by the crowd.

"Where's Wang Hongbiao's body?" someone asked him.

"In... in the freezer. I... I'll bring it out," the man stammered as he quickly walked to the freezer.

Luo Yuan noticed that it looked like a mortuary freezer. There were labels with the names of mutated animals and lower-rank insects attached to it. No doubt, they were more easy to catch given these people's skill level.

The researcher drew open one of the drawers, and pulled out a body wrapped in a plastic bag. He proceeded to open the bag.

The body inside it had visibly been dissected. Its chest cavity was open, and the cranial bone had been removed to reveal the grooves and folds of white and gray brain matter. What caught Luo Yuan's attention though was its chest, thighs and arms, which were covered in reptile-like scales. The kind of cold scales that made one's hair stand on end.

Suddenly, he reached out and touched the body, a bunch of information appearing in his mind.

‘Mutated Man;’

‘Level: Level One Mutant;’

‘Weight: 68 kg;’

“Assessment: His genes were altered by mutated organisms during evolution. He mutated and formed a new gene sequence.”

Sensing Luo Yuan's curiosity, the researcher cautiously said, "We discovered that his body had undergone a great degree of mutation. The skin had become very tough. Normal scalpels were completely useless. We had to use a saw to dissect him. The pores had also closed up and he had experienced hair loss. His nails had become very hard. Even his visceral organs had been transformed. The intestinal microvilli had become dense and twice as long as a normal person's. As you can imagine, he digested food very fast. Also, the body had two hearts, a large one and a smaller one. His blood was flowing 1.5 times faster than the average person's."

Luo Yuan slowly withdrew his hand. From a different point of view, mutants were no longer considered human beings. Suddenly, he felt grateful that he had not turned into a mutated monster after his evolution.

Luo Yuan looked at him and asked, "What do you study these things for?"

The researcher's face went stiff and he broke out in cold sweat as he answered, "We are researching the cause of mutation in human beings. We believe that mutation is a form of evolution."

In the past, this type of experiment might have been considered evil, but in recent times it had become common. In order to ensure the survival of the human race, countless numbers of bloody, inhumane, evil experiments had been conducted in various laboratories. In comparison to those, this was nothing.

Luo Yuan left the laboratory, picked up the sleeping Wang Xianguang and left.

Life there was comfortable, with sufficient resources, clean drinking water, and stocked provisions that could sustain the one hundred people living there for twenty years. Even he had considered staying, but he had eventually rejected the idea.

Luo Yuan have seen how fast mutated plants could erode the cement. The villa outside might not even last a month before it started to collapse as the cement turned into soil. Although the defense in the base was strong, it still wouldn't be safe for long. Perhaps in a year, maybe even less than six months, the base would collapse.

Sooner or later, they would have to leave this place, and it would be more dangerous if they left it later rather than now. Plus, after a long period of comfortable living, their Willpower would gradually fade until there was no such thing anymore.

Luo Yuan closed the iron gate and took one last look before he walked away, carrying Wang Xianguang.

He was cautious on the road, trying to avoid the increasingly stronger mutated beasts. There were several times that he almost initiated a fight, but he was lucky enough to escape. Three hours later, he finally got back to the villa. Huang Jiahui was surprised to see Luo Yuan carrying a woman. Luo Yuan did not wait for her to ask before he said, "This is my former colleague. We will travel together this time."

Cao Lin and several other people looked at each other without

speaking. The atmosphere had suddenly changed.

‘Is this the one you had mentioned?’ Huang Jiahui suddenly remembered as she glanced at Wang Xiaguang.

Luo Yuan nodded. "Make some space for her and cook some porridge. She hasn't eaten anything in days!"

"Alright!" Huang Jiahui answered in agreement before she sighed and turned away.

She had secretly read Luo Yuan's message. Since the mutation, Luo Yuan had received few messages, most of them sent by her. Huang Jiahui was very clear on how she felt about Luo Yuan. It seemed that she had a rival now, even though Luo Yuan did not seem to be interested in her.

Wang Shishi was pouting. She looked unhappy and uneasy. Her eyes kept circling back to Wang Xiaguang as she waited for Huang Jiahui to clean up a room for her. Watching Luo Yuan carry Wang Xiaguang over to the bed, take off her coat and carefully cover her with a blanket, she finally could not hide her thoughts anymore and blurted, 'Brother Luo, what is she to you?'

“Didn't I just say that she was my former colleague?” Luo Yuan said without turning around.

Wang Shi Shi pouted as she said bitterly, "That does not mean anything! You definitely seem to like her. Why else would you be

so gentle to her? I thought you liked me. How could you also like someone else?"

Luo Yuan's feelings for Wang Xianguang were complicated. Having a pretty young woman caring and thinking about you was an indescribable feeling.

Before the apocalypse, when they had been working in the same trading company, Luo Yuan's good looks, likable temperament and quiet confidence coupled with his diligence had attracted the attention of a lot of young women. Wang Xianguang had made a good impression on him, and the feeling had been mutual. However, the difference in their family status had made him decide to stay away. He did not want to depend on other people's fortune for a living.

He had not known that the other party would be so persistent, and given the current circumstances, he did not know what to do about the situation.

He looked troubled as he said, "Careful, don't let Jiahui hear that.'

Wang Shishi opened her mouth, but nothing came out. After a short silence, she said in a quiet voice, 'Let her hear, I'm not scared.'

Chapter 123: Preparing For Departure

Wang Xiaguang slowly woke up after a long night's sleep. She wondered where that strange place that she was staying in was. It looked totally different from the room she used to stay in. She felt strange. She remembered that she has been starving for a few days and she was supposed to be feeling weak. However, she felt good. She was even able to clench her fists.

Suddenly, she heard a very familiar voice from outside. She could not recall who it was, even though she tried extremely hard to. She put on the jacket she found on her headrest and tried to twist the doorknob. She was surprised when the door opened. A natural ray of light entered her room, and she realized that she was out of the underground base.

She was getting more curious as she quickly sped up her footsteps. She was stunned for a moment when she saw a woman mopping the floor in the living room. Huang Jiahui smiled at her and said, "Hi, I'm Huang Jiahui. Are you looking for Luo Yuan? He's outside."

"Hi, I'm Wang Xiaguang," Wang Xiaguang introduced herself as well.

"Luo Yuan told me your name. Don't be afraid. I heard that you've been starved for days. I've made you some porridge." Huang Jiahui was trying to be nice to her, but at the same time, she was also marking her territory.

Unfortunately, Wang Xiaguang did not seem to hear her as she quickly walked out of the house.

Everyone had gathered outside to listen to Luo Yuan's lecture on knife skills. Luo Yuan nodded as he saw all of them paying attention to him.

They had a variety of knives that they had collected from the district. Luo Yuan helped them modify their knives to a level powerful enough for them to kill blue level mutated beasts.

He performed a demonstration before concluding, "You must complete all three styles in one second. You will only pass when you're able to react appropriately, no matter what animal you are facing. There's not much time left, we're leaving tomorrow. You have one last day to practice. I believe all of you understand that the journey will not be easy, and I hope you will each be able to protect yourselves."

Wang Xiaguang was looking at him from the doorway. She had never imagined that Luo Yuan would know martial arts. Luo Yuan sensed that someone was staring at him and he turned around. He was stunned for a second before he smiled. "You're up. Why didn't you sleep a little longer?"

Wang Xiaguang shook her head, but remained silent.

"You're still weak. Go back into the house," Luo Yuan said.

“I’m fine, I haven’t had any fresh air in a very long time. I heard that you’re leaving tomorrow. Did you mean that you’re leaving this place?” Wang Xiaguang asked in a very soft tone.

Luo Yuan nodded with a serious expression. “This place is getting more dangerous. We heard that the government is migrating to the West as well, so we decided to follow.”

“But there are so many mutated beasts outside!” Wang Xiaguang said anxiously. She was not aware of his superpowers.

Suddenly, she heard a puffing sound and saw a gigantic beast emerge from the bushes. She was beyond shocked. She had never seen such a big beast before. She looked so pale, she almost fainted. However, a warm hand quickly grabbed hers before she could faint and said, “It’s alright, that’s my battle beast.”

She felt better when she realized that everyone seemed perfectly fine with it. “That’s... that’s your pet?” she asked.

She had not seen Luo Yuan in almost 6 months and she now realized that he had become a different person. He was stronger and less friendly than he used to be, and she felt more insecure next to him. Luo Yuan nodded, but he did not say anything. He kept looking at the sky. He had noticed that there was a tiny spot there lingering for a long time. The lizard kept roaring while its body got bigger and its scales became darker. It was probably going to evolve soon.

The tiny spot was getting closer to the Earth, forming a huge

shadow on the ground. It was a giant red bird with a long glowing tail. It was aiming for the lizard. Luo Yuan quickly ran outside and looked at it. Everyone followed him. They felt like running when they looked up at the sky.

Luo Yuan was very tense. He knew that the giant bird had to be starving. Otherwise, it would not have taken the risk to attack a huge mutated beast like the lizard. It was too overwhelming a prey for the bird.

The sky became dark as the bird flew lower and lower toward the ground. A strong wind was blowing like a tornado. The scales of the lizard began to crack as it kept roaring towards the sky.

“Should I fire?” Huang Jiahui had heard the chaos and quickly run out with her handgun.

“Hold it!” Luo Yuan said with a serious expression. He knew it was difficult to aim at moving objects. If she did not shoot at the bird’s weakest point, then it might go crazy and attack them. He realized he needed a weapon that would allow him to attack from a distance.

The two beasts were roaring at each other, but half an hour later, the giant bird had still not attacked. It attempted to attack the lizard once, but the lizard’s response was very fast. The bird hesitated before finally giving up. It flew away in a flash, pooping on the ground as it left.

Everyone felt relieved to see it go. Suddenly, a bunch of

biochemical bombs dropped from the sky. Most of them landed on the bushes where the lizard used to rest, but several also landed around the villa. Lin Xiaoji thought things had subsided and became less alert. Suddenly, he was buried under a biochemical bomb. Luo Yuan's face twitched as he watched, and everyone became very quiet for a second.

Suddenly, Lin Xiaoji screamed and struggled to crawl out of the feces. He wanted to talk, but he started puking instead. It smelled awful. Luo Yuan could smell it too even though he was standing far away from him. Influenced by Lin Xiaoji, everyone else started vomiting as well.

Lin Xiaoji washed his body more than ten times that morning. He finished a whole bottle of shower gel, yet he still smelled. The bird's feces were corrosive and several parts of his skin had begun to rot. He had a lot of blisters, and his skin soon broke. Yellowish liquid flowed out of the blisters, looking particularly disgusting. Fortunately, he had a speedy recovery power.

During lunch, Huang Jiahui had to pinch her nose closed. She looked at Lin Xiaoji like she wanted to say something, but she kept silent. A moment later, she suddenly said, "Why don't you eat in the corridor?"

Li Xiaoji smiled and started to retch. He immediately ran out of the house and vomited outside.

Wang Shishi quickly covered her mouth and ran into the bathroom. The rest also started puking. Even Luo Yuan lost his appetite. After lunch, he checked the food stock once again. It

would be a long, dangerous journey, so he had to plan properly what they would bring as well as the quantity of food they would have to pack. However, water was the most important thing. They would have to carry some, just in case they could not find any in the forest.

They would only bring some food, clothes, salt and medicine. In the end, he added a few bars of gold to his list, as well as a few stacks of money and several credit cards. He believed they might get the chance to use the money and the gold along the way.

Luo Yuan modified the camping tents by using the skin of the haunted tree. It would be enough to protect them from mutated insects. He also made a few spears from the haunted tree, each weighing about 25 kg.

He tried to throw a spear and it flew about 100 meters away and penetrated the ground. He did not feel tired at all as he has upgraded his Physique to 16 points already. However, the spears were not powerful enough to kill dark blue mutated beasts yet.

He had not thought of that earlier, when the giant bird had attacked the lizard. Shooting skills took too long to master and they required a lot of bullets, which were very difficult to acquire. Spears were the best weapon to attack flying animals with as they were quite powerful and easy to use.

Chapter 124: The Miracle Of Life

The next day, everyone got up before dawn with dark circles around their eyes. The atmosphere in the living room was depressed and everyone quietly packed their things. In actuality, most people were not willing to migrate-especially Huo Dong. He was approaching his middle age years and his physical strength as well as energy were not comparable to the younger people in the group. He will most likely die halfway through the journey, however, he did not have many options. He was certain that he would die sooner without Luo Yuan as he had no superpower. He then put his backpack on his back and firmly gripped a knife in his hand.

"I can help carry some of the things." Wang Xiaguang said embarrassingly as she was empty-handed while everyone was busy packing.

"It's alright, you just recovered... we will help you with these." Huang Jiahui said with a smile.

"It will be good enough if you can catch up with our speed ." Wang Shishi also joined the conversation.

Luo Yuan stared at Wang Shishi for a second and spoke to Wang Xiaguang, "Don't worry, we will go slower on the first day. You should eat more meat so that your energy can be restored faster."

After consuming mutated meats for two nights, Wang Xiaguang seemed to be much better but she probably needed a few more days

to fully recover.

Wang Xianguang smiled happily as she felt Luo Yuan treated her as nicely as he did in the early days. She replied, "My physique is good, I used to exercise every morning. Do you have an extra knife?"

"These knives are very sharp and you might hurt yourself." Luo Yuan hesitated a moment and as he wanted to protect her as a form of compensation.

"I've practiced a lot in college, it shouldn't be a problem for me." Wang Xianguang was shy after saying that to him.

"Well, there should be a few more left in the basement. Let me check." Luo Yuan did not reject her request anymore as he thought it was good for her to have a weapon to at least protect herself if he is too busy fighting mutated beasts. He found a samurai sword and brought it up.

Wang Xianguang took the sword and began to familiarise with it. She tried to practice the routines which Luo Yuan showed to the others. Surprisingly, she could do it better than all of them, even though it might not be as fast or accurate as what Luo Yuan had requested. Everyone was amazed.

No one could imagine that a weak woman like her could be so skillful. Lin Xiaoji looked as though he had just met Superwoman!

Wang Xiaguang stopped practicing after a while and asked Luo Yuan, "What do you think?"

"Acceptable." Luo Yuan replied.

Wang Xiaguang frowned her nose tenderly and said, "I haven't practiced for a long time. I'll certainly beat you in the future."

Wang Shishi twitched her lower lip to show her dissatisfaction. Brother Luo is the most powerful man in her heart and no one could ever compete with him.

"Well, you have always been the most powerful." Luo Yuan smiled and said to Wang Xiaguang. Luo Yuan loaded most of their things on the back of the lizard. He also wrapped some stuff in a canvas and tied it to the back of his loyal pet.

Luo Yuan returned to the living room to take his backpack and Zhanmadao. As he noticed everyone was already ready, he said, "Please carry some meat with you in your backpack as we might need to leave everything else behind if it is too dangerous. Also, it is not too late to change your mind now if you want to stay here. There is a lot more food in the basement which can ensure you a worry-free life for a few months."

Luo Yuan did not hear any objections and then said, "Let's go then!"

It was a cloudless day which was a good sign. As the huge body of

the lizard slowly stood up, the group immediately followed from the back. The road was destroyed and only tanks could travel on it. Other than Luo Yuan, none of them had come out to the district in the last 10 days. They were shocked when they saw the condition of the roads and the collapsed buildings.

Plenty of green filled their eyes. Weeds, mosses, and vines had engulfed the entire city. The sun was shining on them but they did not feel warm at all as they were too distracted by what they were seeing. Wang Xianguang could not believe the city had changed so much because it was still a beautiful one when she first entered. She did not expect it to be destroyed to this state in such a short time.

Everyone walked at a slow pace to avoid the territories of mutated beasts. They had just completed 10 km of their journey right before noon. Luo Yuan spread out a cloth on the floor and everyone had their lunch there but Lin Xiaoji naturally ate his lunch somewhere further away as he did not want to affect their appetites.

"We are here now." Luo Yuan nodded while pointing on the map and then drew a line and continued speaking, "We are less than fifteen kilometers from the nearest highway. It will be great if we can get there before the sunset."

"Why are we going to the highway? It is mostly farmland there and I'm afraid it would have become a forest by now. It's too dangerous." Huang Jiahui said.

"The highway is higher than normal land and is equipped with

civilian as well as military facilities. Most importantly it is built with concrete that even heavy tanks cannot destroy. Furthermore, the highways are now wider thanks to the reinforcements that took place before the outbreak-both sides of the highway should have at least one hundred-meter-wide isolation zones and every section of the road has additional fortifications. Moreover, we can rest inside the outposts.” Luo Yuan responded in detail.

“My guesses are that it should still be in good condition. If I'm right, we can even use a car to travel along the highway if we can find a vehicle. We wouldn't get lost if we used the highway.” Luo Yuan continued.

“Though I am worried about the cross-sea bridge. If the bridge is broken, we might need to take the long way up.” Luo Yuan added.

“I used to travel on the cross-sea bridge. The water had dried up more than six months ago. Furthermore, now is not high-tide season so it shouldn't be a problem, right?” Cao Lin spoke.

“I hope so.” Luo Yuan replied.

Three-quarters of the Earth is occupied by water and many marine organisms are very dangerous. Fortunately they only live in the ocean, otherwise, the human race would be extinct.

“However, this road also passes Meishan Park, right?” Cao Lin asked.

"It's fine, my family used to stay there. The whole mountain had been sealed with cement before the outbreak." Ning Xiaoran said.

They talked a while more to finalize the route they were going to take. After resting for another ten minutes, everyone was back on the road. They met a lot of ants on their journey. Those ants appeared black and shiny and were about the size of a human fist. There were a lot of them and even their lizard could not do anything about it.

Luo Yuan had no choice but to avoid them as he definitely could not handle a million big ants alone. A lot of fresh blood and bones appeared on the road after the ants were gone. Luo Yuan was grateful that they managed to escape from the ants when he saw the bones on the road. He could never forget the time when numerous green mutated bugs attacked Donghu City. It was as if The God of Death came down from the sky and destroyed the entire Donghu City in one or two days.

Fortunately, those ants were not as dangerous or destructive as the green bugs and it was just a small episode of their journey. When the sky was completely dark, the group was close to the highway's intersection. It was close to the suburbs but not far from the countryside. Suddenly, everyone subconsciously stopped. They were shocked when they looked ahead and noticed a giant tree standing firm and tall about seven or eight kilometers away. It was surrounded by a white fog, which reminded them of the scenes in Wonderland.

A large plot of land was shaded by its huge canopy but the giant tree looked as though it had been struggling to live for a few

hundred years as the scars on its trunk were visible even though they were looking at it from a distance. It must be a very strong and powerful tree as it was still standing there at the end of the world despite enduring numerous lightning strikes over the years.

"I always thought only the banyan tree could form a forest, but compared to this giant tree, the rest are just plants." Huo Dong said.

"Is that the biggest tree in the world?" Wang Shishi asked in a dreamy tone.

Luo Yuan did not oppose her question as it was really considered legendary that a tree can grow to be that big in size. Luo Yuan could not identify the ranking of the giant tree but it definitely should not be compared to the Haunted Locust Tree in Hedong City. He hoped that the giant tree had simply grown to a huge size without undergoing any mutation as they needed to pass by the highway beneath its canopy.

"Don't sigh. Find a safe place to rest tonight and tomorrow we will continue our journey." Luo Yuan said.

There were many abandoned buildings everywhere so it was very easy to get an empty room. However, a little more effort was needed if they wanted to get a safer place. After some searching, they finally found a four-star hotel with a basement. The basement used to be the hotel's office with computers and printers. A thick layer of dust was covering the carpet with many dried blood stains and skeletons scattered everywhere. They also found a few rifles on the floor with a bunch of bullets. Unfortunately, all the bullets

were just empty shells.

Luo Yuan suspected that there was a terrible battle here not long ago with some mutated beasts. The place was really dark to the point that their torchlights did not help much. Luo Yuan decided to check the place alone to ensure it was safe enough to stay as he did not want the rest to take the risk.

The group decided to stay in the large office space while Luo Yuan inspected the place. None of them felt comfortable as there were too many bones around the place, however, they immediately felt grateful and relaxed when Luo Yuan returned.

Chapter 125: Skyrocketing Power

It was difficult to start the fire in a completely sealed room. Luo Yuan took a bite of the preserved sausage made from meats of mutated beasts and tried very hard to swallow it. They made almost 50 kg of preserved sausages as it provided a high amount of energy and was beneficial to the human body. The quantity they had was enough to sustain all of them for about two weeks.

Huo Dong took a sausage and stuffed it into his mouth as well. Suddenly, he stopped moving as his teeth almost chipped. He quickly covered his mouth. The sausages became very hard after it cooled down and felt like coagulated latex which is extremely difficult to chew. Although Luo Yuan's teeth were stronger than normal, he too had to try very hard to chew it.

“Drink some water.” Huang Jiahui poured a cup of warm water for Luo Yuan.

Luo Yuan took a sip and finally the food slid down his esophagus. He took another sausage out and started chewing again. He only stopped after he finished the fifth sausage. He began to feel warmer after the food had digested inside his stomach.

“Beep! Energy +1.”

Luo Yuan was delighted, “Finally, an upgrade to 13 points!”

Although Luo Yuan is considered as an evolutionary survivor, he had no specific power. For example, Lin Xiaoji has the ability to

recovery speedily though the other powers he had were just marginally stronger than normal people and his energy level and dexterity did not exceed 13 points. Luo Yuan did not know how many points he needed to obtain the ability to recover as quickly as Lin Xiaoji.

Ning Xiaoran's power is related to strength while Luo Yuan's power is related to strength and sensitivity. His 'sensitivity' had reached its optimum level and hence there has not been any significant improvements lately.

He had stopped pushing himself to upgrade after he figured out the theory behind his powers. The reality is always different from the ideal state and 13 points seemed to be the boundary for evolution. It is possible that they could still upgrade after long periods of training, however, they do not have much time to practice. Hence, he was willing to take the risk to assign his bonus points now because the more powerful he is the safer he will be.

Luo Yuan opened the status panel and checked on the existing property points. He decided to assign all the bonus points he had to dexterity. He kept adding property points to his dexterity but each assignment made him feel extremely uncomfortable. He felt everything in the world was moving very slowly.

The worse thing about this power was that he needed to constantly slow down the speed of his speech in order to avoid any suspicious thoughts from others.

“What's wrong with you?” Wang Xiaguang kept looking at Luo Yuan and asked.

“I... I’m fine. I was just thinking about something.” He realized he spoke too fast and tried to slow down.

“Something wrong with the route?” Huang Jiahui asked. Everyone else started looking at him.

Luo Yuan did not expect his excuse to draw so much attention from them. He then said, "You're too nervous, we should be fine until tomorrow afternoon. Jiahui, bring the map of Hedong city.”

Huang Jiahui quickly took the map from their luggage and opened it. Luo Yuan pointed on the map and said, “This is the location of the giant tree and this is the area.”

Luo Yuan has an amazing memory and could remember almost everything he has ever seen. He made a mark on the map and said, "Based on the map, we are going to pass the giant tree under its shade. That might be dangerous, but the journey there should be relatively safe. The giant tree is very strong beyond imagination.”

Everyone was shocked when they heard Luo Yuan describe it as a ‘giant tree’ because they were still scarred by the memory of the Haunted Locust Tree earlier even though they did not actually see any bad spirits.

"We probably need to walk an extra 30 km if we take an alternative route." Cao Lin said.

Everyone was in fear. Huo Dong started to regret following them as he did not expect such a strong and scary creature. They could not even imagine the power of the giant tree but suspected that even a missile probably could not damage it.

Huo Dong wanted to say something but ended up remaining silent as he knew Luo Yuan would not change his mind. If Huo Dong attempts to leave alone, he will probably be eaten by the beasts before he could even reach his next destination.

Luo Yuan noticed that everyone was depressed so he smiled and said, “That’s the worst speculation. The tree should be just a normal tree that grows rapidly. There are a few mutated birds lingering above the tree, so I guess their nests are there. If the mutated birds are fine, then it should be fine for us to walk under the shade.”

“Are there many more mutated birds?” Wang Shishi asked anxiously.

“If you’re afraid then you should have stayed in the villa.” Luo Yuan said coldly.

Wang Shishi was biting her lip and glared at Luo Yuan as she hated it when he kept lecturing her publicly as it made her look like an idiot.

There was nothing much to do after dinner and everyone decided to go to bed early. Although the office was big, they soon realized that it could not fit many tents. After some arrangements, Lin

Xiaoji ended up having his own tent because nobody was willing to stay with him-he was too smelly. Ning Xiaoran was sleeping alone as well because she was afraid she would accidentally hurt others in her sleep. The rest were sharing.

Huo Dong and Chen Xianfeng shared a tent, while Wang Xianguang and Cao Lin shared another. Wang Shihi and Huang Jiahui squeezed in a tent together with Luo Yuan as usual. Wang Xianguang could not believe that Luo Yuan was sharing a tent together with Huang Jiahui and Wang Shishi. She was rubbing the edge of her shirt while watching them enter the same tent and tears were rolling down her cheeks.

Luo Yuan could sense what was going on but he closed his eyes and took a deep breath as the tears from Wang Xianguang lingered in his mind. He sighed as he knew he could never be loyal to her. However, he did not want to lie to her as well. It is good for her to know the type of person he is as well.

Chapter 126: Heaven's Pillar Tree

The team departed again the next day when it was still dawn. Luo Yuan noticed some sadness in Wang Xiagiang's eyes as he gazed at her. She sensed his sight, looked up at him with a glance and immediately lowered her head without saying a word.

Luo Yuan wanted to say something but hesitated, and sighed. After half an hour, the team finally went on the express highway. On the road they could see smashed heavy trucks everywhere instead of consumer cars. There were countless of materials on the road-including ingots, grains, machineries, instruments, and even plenty of guns and ammunition.

Before the collapse of humanity, this express highway was the only route connecting Hedong City with other places. Day or night, there were a lots of trucks passing by this highway. Unfortunately, it had also being affected by the outbreak. Luo Yuan tried to gather some weapons but couldn't carry all the ammunition with him. He took only three boxes of bullets and hanged them on the giant lizard. Now everyone had a gun, they were all 95 military-type rifles. Other than that, there was even a sniper and Luo Yuan gave it to Chen Xianfeng.

Although he might not be as capable as Luo Yuan in terms of combat skills, at least he could help in shooting in case there's any battle. The nearer they got to the giant tree, the more amazed they felt. From the middle of the trunk onward, there were multiple giant roots that went deep into the ground. All the surrounding roads had been uplifted with its growth. Even though the building at the suburb area had already collapsed, Luo Yuan could see that the giant tree was still growing.

The team took a quick rest at noon and continued their journey. They finally entered into the shaded area of the tree when it was about 3pm. The sky was completely eclipsed by a boundless number of green leaves. This was the world of birds! There were countless large and small mutated birds inhabiting the giant tree and they were tweeting away endlessly. The air was so fresh that everyone felt revitalised.

This was definitely a fairyland to stay in, if only there were no mutated birds, snakes and all different kinds of weird creatures that lived in the giant tree. None of them had the mood to enjoy the beautiful scenery as they noticed that this was almost an independent ecosystem that housed countless of mutated creatures living therein.

The ground was covered with feathers and excrements as well as skeletons of mutated beasts. Luo Yuan could find almost any grade of materials there. He picked up a few two meter long light blue feathers. After becoming an evolved human, he could vaguely feel the power of the property, like how thick the earth is and how moist the water is.

“Tail feather of a Storm Bird”

“Rarity: dark blue.”

“Weight: 3 grams”

“Additional Capacity: Balancing airflow.”

“Evaluation: The Storm Bird is a peculiar variant of creatures which naturally hates storms. Whenever storms appear, you can always see it chasing it away. It has the natural ability to quell storms, and this ability is fully embodied in its feathers. It only requires a small amount of wind energy.”

Excitement could be seen on Luo Yuan's face. Aside from his saber, all his other equipments were still in the light blue rank. He wanted an upgrade for so long but had never found the right materials. Unexpectedly, he has found it now! Luo Yuan paid more attention to the feathers on the ground and found a few more similar ones. He managed to find several other blue-level feathers, but there was only one with properties he desired out of the six feathers found. Luo Yuan still collected it though it was a fire series material. As the west was located in the plateau, the air was so thin and the temperature during the day and night were extremely cold. Adding this feather into quilt or underwear could help keep them warm.

"Look, there is a fruit over there." Cao Lin suddenly whispered with excitement.

Luo Yuan raised his head and saw a fruit the size of a head hiding in the layers of leaves. Its surface was a combination of green and red which looked very attractive. Apparently the fruit had been noticed by someone else as there was a gigantic green mutated bird standing like a stone on branches not far away. Its eyes were half-closed, staring at the fruit over and over again while paying attention to its surrounding.

Since the outbreak, Luo Yuan rarely saw any plants or trees with fruits or food. Even the former artificially cultivated corn had an unfavorable production rate. On this the giant tree, he could hardly see any other fruits except for this one. Of course there might be some hidden ones in the leaves, however, in Luo Yuan observation, if this fruit could be noticed by such a powerful creature it must be very precious.

Luo Yuan was already thinking of how to retrieve the fruit but he soon changed his mind. The gigantic bird was obviously not easy to deal with, especially now that there are so many ordinary humans with him. If he started a battle, many people might be sacrificed especially people whom he cared about like Huang Jiahui, Wang Xianguang and Wang Shishi. If any of them became casualties it would hurt him. At this time he was shocked to discover that the fruit suddenly ripened at an incredible rate-from half green, quickly turning into pure red with a special scent released into the air.

"Don't look at it anymore, keep walking to the shelter in front." Luo Yuan instructed with a heavy heart. He knew that this fruit would cause a lot of trouble with such a heavy fragrance, and he estimated that it would soon attract other mutated creatures. He also noticed that his giant lizard was also attracted and kept staring at the fruit up above its head.

In fact, the scent affected even ordinary humans. Everyone was attracted and had the desire to taste it. At this time, suddenly, a red and yellow giant bird flew towards the fruit. The next moment, they could hear a sharp pitch from the two giant birds which were fighting with each other. Only then did they get to their senses and rush to the shelter in front.

After running for a while, Luo Yuan realized that his giant lizard was not following them and still looking up at the fruit. He quickly ran back angrily. At this moment, there was a notification from the task system: "F-Level mission, seize the fruit of the Heaven's Pillar Tree."

"Damn it!" Luo Yuan cursed with a bad feeling.

As he expected, the battle between the two giant birds was too intense. It caused the ripened fruit to fall down from the tree. The giant birds were not fast enough and could only watch it fall helplessly. They attempted to catch it but it was too late. The giant lizard was very excited and ran frantically towards the fruit. In an instant, it had swallowed the entire fruit!

Since the fruit had already been eaten, Luo Yuan could not help but accept the task given by the system. The next moment, a task completion notification came into the system. This was the fastest task completion ever, but to Luo Yuan, he knew that the task had not even started. The blue-class green giant bird that had been waiting beside the fruit for long time was furious! It gave up on its previous opponent and targeted the lizard instead.

The giant lizard growled repeatedly and prepared for the fight. In the past, it had fought almost every day with other mutated creatures and had already accumulated a lot of battle experience. It did not panic even. The moment when the giant bird tried to strike it, the lizard moved its body and successfully dodged the attack.

“BANGGGGGG”

The giant bird caught nothing but made a 2 meters long dent on the road. Luo Yuan did not have enough time to check on the system notification but noticed that the giant bird had not gotten up yet. He quickly picked up several spears and moved forward at lightning speed. In just one second, his speed had reached its peak. When the giant bird was trying to get back up again, he lifted a short spear, and with all his might, threw it at the giant bird! At this moment, Luo Yuan was 15 times more powerful in term of speed, strength and agility than the average person-almost like Superman. With this powerful force, the short spear that had hit the giant bird caused it to fly a few meters away. It was startled and growled angrily. It quickly fanned its wings repeatedly in an attempt to fly up again.

But what came the next was another short spear which hit it. Luo Yuan threw the short spears one after another without any pauses. By the fourth one, the giant bird could not balance itself anymore and fell to the ground heavily. Luo Yuan was surprised because he knew that the short spears were sharp enough to pierce through even a rhino with thick skin. However, this blue-class mutant bird, although it looked exhausted and had lost a few feathers, had no visible wounds on its body. It fanned its wings crazily and tried to fly again but was too late.

The giant lizard moved at a high speed towards the bird, bit on its slim neck, tore its throat and did not give the giant bird any opportunity to counterattack. It was always a fact that, no matter

how strong the flying creatures were, when they fought with the ground creatures, once they fell on the land, it meant their death approached. Even though the giant lizard was still one level lower than the giant bird, it was winning the battle. The neck of the giant bird was now broken. It struggled, but failed to get up.

A few seconds later, the giant bird's head was completely ripped off by the lizard. Blood splattered everywhere. Luo Yuan could hardly see any wounds on the lizard apart from a few scratches on its chest. Unexpectedly, it was unhurt from the battle. The other red and yellow giant bird which fought with the green giant bird earlier had been hovering in the sky when the battle was ongoing but now it fled the area when it witnessed what had happened.

This battle was unexpectedly smooth and did not take even half a minute with the help from a mutated creature. This time, the giant lizard had no interest in the bird's flesh. It walked to one side, and growled several times. Its eyes sparkled and it seemed abnormally excited with overflowing energy. In fact, only now did Luo Yuan recall that the giant lizard had swallowed a fruit from the Heaven's Pillar Tree. Although he was unsure of the power of the fruit, he was certain that all these unusual reactions from the lizard were triggered by this fruit.

He opened the property panel and found that the lizard had leveled up. After this fight it gained almost 8 experience points. Luo Yuan looked at its status and a word appeared that was out of Luo Yuan's expectation.

"Evolving..."

Luo Yuan looked at the giant lizard cheerfully, and said “It’s finally evolving”!

Chapter 127: Airflow Balancing

After staring at the lizard for a while, Luo Yuan realised that it would take some time for it to completely evolve so he decided to divert his focus to other things first. He walked to the giant bird's carcass and noticed that a few spears had been completely shattered-leaving just a few good ones left. He was surprised as he did not expect that such powerful short spears which were made from the Haunted Locust Tree had actually been destroyed this easily. He thought it would at least be able to be reused.

Luo Yuan had actually underestimated the power of his throws. A five pound short spear thrown at supersonic speed generates an inherent kinetic energy of around 200,000J-which is equivalent to dropping a 20,000kg object from about 10 meters. Though the giant bird had a strong level of defense, Luo Yuan noticed that all its feathers had been shredded at the spots where the spears had hit it-revealing bare skin which was full of blood.

Luo Yuan pulled out his Zhanmadao and cut through the tough layer of skin and muscle-exposing the internal organs of the giant bird. He saw that its internal organs had been ruptured, especially those located near to its skin.

"No wonder it fell from the sky... In addition to the effect of the short spears, the main reason was due to the serious internal injuries it already had." Luo Yuan thought.

He suddenly felt that perhaps there was no need to synthesize the short spears anymore. In order to hurt the huge mutated creatures, a small wound seemed far less effective than a blunt hit.

Furthermore, short spears are supposed to be used repeatedly to have the best effect but the quantity that Luo Yuan had was far from enough. He now had only eight left-sufficient to cope for only one or two more battles. Short spears, as a long-range weapon, are especially useful in this area full of mutated birds. Unfortunately, Luo Yuan couldn't find a suitable materials to synthesise them anymore. He decided to leave it aside first and come back to it later.

"Luo Yuan, are you hurt?" Huang Jiahui asked as she ran to him from afar, followed by several other people.

"I am alright. We are quite lucky this time." Luo Yuan explained. This battle was the easiest one by far as he did not even sweat even though a blue class creatures was killed.

Several people walked in front of Luo Yuan to look at the body of the giant bird but did so with a safe distance. Though the giant bird was dead, it still scared ordinary people away. In fact, this time was better as compared to the last time when they met the mutated snake in Gaotang Town.

Everyone looked at the truck-sized bird and remained shocked. Though they knew that Luo Yuan is very strong, they never witnessed him fighting with a mutated creature. Of course it was killed by the giant lizard, but they realized that Luo Yuan must be very powerful to be its master. There were several evolved humans other than Luo Yuan, but compared to him, they were just like ordinary people.

Luo Yuan looked at his watch and it was already 4pm. Since the

lizard was still evolving, it was not convenient for it to keep walking. Luo Yuan said, "Let's stop here for today... we can rest at the shelter in front."

Huang Jiahui thought Luo Yuan was tired from the fight and agreed, "It sounds good. We have been eating dried food the whole day. Let's look for branches or wood so that we can cook soup for dinner."

"You don't have to waste time looking for any. I have been observing the surroundings all the way since just now. I didn't see any suitable wood or branches." Luo Yuan remarked. He has been paying attention to these things all the way to analyze the properties of the tree, though nothing fell from it.

"We can use the excrements on the ground." Cao Lin suggested though it was met by some disgusted faces from the rest. She quickly continued, "I meant that we can use dried guano, which should not be too smelly."

This was the only solution as everyone wanted to have a warm dinner with soup. They agreed and started to look for dried guano despite the bad smell. In actuality, there was nothing much in the surrounding but guano. Before leaving, Luo Yuan cut out some of the internal organs from the giant bird. These were precious ingredients that he would not want to miss. Unfortunately, its head was eaten by the giant lizard. The brain of the mutated creature is the most essential and precious part-the texture is very smooth and soft so it's very delicious and simple to cook.

The shelter was actually a small army post which was set up

every few hundred meters on the highway as a defense against the mutated creatures. It has a very strong wall and thus it looked great from the outside. However, due to the thickness of the wall, it actually has very little space inside it. Luo Yuan and the group walked passed the door and noticed that there were countless palm-sized black insects that sneaked out from inside which scared some of them. When there were no more beetles in sight, Luo Yuan walked in cautiously. There were a lot of bones and uniforms piled up and judging by the number of skeletons, it seemed like there were three people here before. He went onto the second floor and found seven other bodies. This was the number for a complete team. The four cannons were still intact and empty bullets were everywhere on the floor. There were only three unopened boxes of bullets left.

"There is no sign of damage, so this place must have been attacked by small creatures." Huo Dong said with a pale face.

Luo Yuan nodded. He had a strange feeling and used his senses to constantly scan the surrounding. Suddenly, his face changed. He moved to the side of Wang Xianguang at lighting speed, firmly holding onto something on the wall next to her. "Pak pak pak" it sounded like something seemed to be whipping on the wall.

"Stay away!" Luo Yuan shouted.

Wang Xianguang was frightened and stepped a few steps back. "BANG!" a loud noise was heard and the shelter was shaken a little though they could not see anything. The unknown created fear and everyone was very nervous to see such a strange situation. They held their breath to prevent making any sounds. Luo Yuan

pressed on the creature's body, took out his Zhanmadao and cut it, causing blood to splatter on the wall.

The mysterious creature struggled for some time, but it slowly stopped moving. It still appeared invisible. This was a mutated snake about two meters long with scaly body. It was like a chameleon which can always change its appearance according to its environment. However, this creature was definitely more dangerous than an ordinary chameleon because it could fully integrate into its surroundings. Luo Yuan could barely sense its existence if it did not move a moment ago.

Wang Shishi wanted to go nearer but was stopped by Luo Yuan, "Don't come yet, there might be more inside."

Luo Yuan checked the shelter all over again and managed to discover one more inside.

"What is this? Why is it invisible?" Huang Jiahui asked after Luo Yuan confirmed that it was safe to come in. She was frightened by the sight of the blood.

"Do you know what is a chameleon? This is almost like a chameleon," Luo Yuan responded. No wonder every ordinary person died once they stepped into the shelter.

Luo Yuan peeled off its skin and finally it was exposed in front of everyone. "We can add these two creatures into our dinner list." He did a quick analysis on them and other than the poisonous parts, the rest of its bodies were edible. Snake meat tasted the best

to Luo Yuan although he grew up afraid of snakes. Cao Lin and Huang Jiahui did not have any dispute on eating them. They took the two dead snakes outside and started to prepare dinner. Huo Dong did not feel comfortable staying alone with Luo Yuan so he left to help with dinner.

Luo Yuan shook his head as he knew that this was the price to pay to be a powerful man. People tended to get scared of him even if he looked friendly and talked nicely. Luo Yuan thought for a while and started to check on the two snake skins.

He performed an analysis:

"Skin of Phantom Snake"

"Rarity: Light Blue."

"Weight: 6 grams"

"Additional capacity: Able to integrate into the environment. Hidden."

"Rating: Phantom snakes are born to be predators. It can instantly change its skin color to adapt to any environment and is almost impossible to see with the naked eye. All its capabilities come from its skin."

The ability to be stealthy was good, but unfortunately it provided a low level of defense. He would need to have shoes, pants, a cap

and a jacket, along with a whole set of equipment to cover himself if he wanted to be completely invisible and these two sets of skin were far from enough to make a full set of attire.

Luo Yuan shook his head to snap himself out of his deep thought. There was no rush to have it done now, what was more important was to synthesize the feather from the Storm Bird. Luo Yuan put a few feathers inside his clothes. He whispered the word “synthesize” and soon they turned into ashes. His black clothes turned green. Luo Yuan then picked up a few more and continued synthesising them. By the time he used the third feather, his clothes had completely turned into a dark blue level of equipment so he stopped. He had seven feathers left and still needed them for pants and shoes.

Luo Yuan performed an analysis on his clothes:

"Floating Sportswear."

"Material: Storm Bird Feathers, Nylon."

"Rarity: Dark Blue."

"Weight: 2kg."

"Defense level: 14-17"

"Additional capacity: Speed, Balance Airflow."

"Equipment Requirements: None."

"Evaluation: This is a buoyant magical sportswear which can provide protection against ordinary swords and bullets. It can balance up the airflow even when you are running without the need to worry about air resistance."

Luo Yuan felt relieved. He was worried about his ability to accelerate in his new clothes so he was glad that his speed will not be reduced while his other capabilities are strengthened. Though he did not know exactly how useful it was, apparently it was much better than the original one he had. He continued to synthesise his pants and shoes. After he completed the process, the bird feathers had fully depleted. Luo Yuan felt much lighter even though the surrounding airflow was extremely calm. Even when he breathed, the air he exhaled dissipated immediately and quietly.

He quickly tested out the clothes by moving around the room a few times at a fast speed and he could hardly feel any air resistance in the room.

"Airflow balancing. So this is what it feels to be able to balance airflow." Luo Yuan thought in his mind.

Chapter 128: Abnormality

After dinner, Luo Yuan closed the door to the shelter and removed the bullets from all the cannons. He then he used his knife to cut a few pieces of concrete from the highway to block the bullet holes of the cannons. He had to be extra careful because he was worried that small mutated creatures would sneak in without anyone noticing. It would be a lot riskier if he did not put extra effort to seal the cannons.

When it came to nightfall, it was almost impossible to see any light under the dense shade of Heaven's Pillar Tree. The noise in the surrounding was very quiet as well. The shelter was too small to set up tents but fortunately, there were enough beds on the first floor which were left over from the army men who stayed there before. Luo Yuan carefully wiped his knife and put it on the bed.

"Let me wash your feet." Huang Jiahui took a basin and placed it next to Luo Yuan's feet.

"I will do it myself." Luo Yuan replied with discomfort and continued, "Where did you get the water from?"

Huang Jiahui smiled and insisted. She grabbed Luo Yuan's feet, took off his shoes gently, and said, "This is the water we use to wash our face. I think it is clean and I have mixed it with some warm water."

She put both his feet into the basin and gently scrubbed them. "Do you think we are too burdensome to you? You don't actually

need to take all these risks and could have reached the West much earlier if you went without us.” She suddenly said.

In fact, it scared her a lot today seeing how strong Luo Yuan was. She felt insecure and afraid that Luo Yuan might leave her alone one day in the future. Everyone heard what Huang Jiahui had said and turned to look at the two of them.

Luo Yuan could sense her abnormal feeling towards him. He sighed and said, "No, please don't think this way. No one is burdensome here. Without you, I would not have any good meals to eat, no one to talk to, and no one to wash my feet!"

"Today is the first time I washed your feet." Huang Jiahui replied and smiled.

"You can wash it every day." Luo Yuan said firmly.

Cao Lin, who was lying on the bed, kept tossing and turning. In fact, she was the one who felt most insecure. She was neither an evolved human nor someone who had an intimate relationship with Luo Yuan like Huang Jiahui and Wang Xianguang. Other than just helping with some unimportant tasks like cooking, mopping the floor and doing laundry, she could not help in anything else. There was no reason for Luo Yuan to keep her in the team and protect her.

She would do anything to let Luo Yuan care about her more. She would not hesitate to have sex with him or do something even more shameful to attract him. However, Luo Yuan never had those

intentions with her and he normally does not even look at her. She found that Luo Yuan was not a lascivious man, so she had given up for a long time. But today, she started to worry again and realized that she should have done that before.

"Something is not right... I should take the initiative to be closer to him." Cao Lin pondered as she touched her face and then her breasts.

Nothing happened during the night but no one was able to sleep well. The next morning when Luo Yuan woke up and walked out from the shelter, he was stunned by what he saw. A strange mutated creature was lying near the shelter. The atmosphere that surrounded it was somewhat strange and uncomfortable. He almost wanted to attack this creature but he was too familiar with its scent.

During the night, the giant lizard had undergone a tremendous change! It doubled in size and its scales turned from light green to dark green with some added complex geometric patterns. The horns on its head almost disappeared with only the middle one still prominent though it had changed from black to jade with a spiral shape. Luo Yuan also noticed that it had three eyes that were arranged in a triangular order. It looked very strange with some mysterious prestige. In addition, it had 4 toes instead of 3, and the color of its feet became darker with the metal texture.

The giant lizard noticed Luo Yuan's presence and lifted its eyelid. It looked at him differently. Only after a long pause did it stand up. It was not as frightened of Luo Yuan as before and its actions seemed to be very provocative with its powerful strength and

enhanced self-confidence. Luo Yuan was too excited with the changes of the lizard and was not aware of these unusual characteristics.

Suddenly, it sneezed and white smoke was emitted from its nostrils. There were flames inside the smoke and the temperature in the surrounding had increased! Luo Yuan quickly stepped back. He opened the properties panel to check on the new properties of a giant lizard and as expected, there were tremendous changes.

“Fighting beast: Forest lizard.”

“Level: Dark Blue.”

“Attributes:-”

“Power: 2”

“Agility: 14”

“Physique: 18”

“Intelligence: 4”

“Perception: 6”

“Will: 2”

“Experience: 18036”

“Skills: Biting: 19; Tearing: B; Striking: tail strike; Proficiency: 0; Survival skill: 18;

Observation; Breathing: 2”

“Natural ability: Sense of danger, Fire Breath”

“Status: Strong”

“Loyalty: 61 (there is risk of betrayal if less than 60; full value 100)”

“Unassigned attribute points: 1”

“Unallocated technique points: 6”

In summary, its level was upgraded from blue to dark blue; its agility remained the same but its strength increased by 2. Other properties had increased by a little-tearing, striking, and observation. The rest were all newly added skills. It was not surprising to have tearing, striking and breathing skills. In the past there was not much that the giant lizard could do. It only had biting and tail striking skills. Luo Yuan never saw it use its claws to attack before. Now, its sharp claws and the horn on its head have massively evolved. It is definitely not just for decoration! The only

thing that Luo Yuan could not understand was the observant skill.

"Is it because of how I trained the lizard in the past? Or has its intelligence simply increased after evolving?" Luo Yuan thought in his mind.

Anyway, it was a good to have a smart giant lizard. Luo Yuan did not think further after this since it already had the ability to challenge dark blue class mutated creatures. Hence, other dark blue class creatures should be not be a threat to it anymore. Unfortunately, the dexterity of the lizard remained the same so Luo Yuan had to manually increase it. But suddenly, Luo Yuan noticed the loyalty points and was shocked!

"How come it dropped below 60? It is even lower than the first time I defeated it."

He looked up and noticed there was hostility in the giant lizard's eyes. Luo Yuan thought angrily, "Luckily my prestige still has a deep impression on it... Otherwise it would have become a traitor."

"Damn, it really is a beast! Fortunately there are still some attribute points unassigned, otherwise, it would be a disaster and definitely more difficult to defeat again." He was angry and felt like he wanted to kill it but he stopped himself. He took a deep breath and tried to calm himself down. Now that the lizard had no fear towards him anymore, if he chose to ignore, it would definitely be out of his control and attack him instead. He had only two options-leave it or defeat it again.

It would be a huge loss to him if he left it behind. The journey would be more challenging without the lizard as its gigantic size actually scared a lot of small mutated creatures away. After pondering about the benefits it would bring, he chose not to give up on it. Fortunately, its loyalty points were still within a controllable range and thus it should not be too difficult to defeat it again.

After he made his decision, Luo Yuan walked towards the giant lizard. It instinctively felt threatened by Luo Yuan's movements and growled as a warning. It still had a deep impression of how strong Luo Yuan was and thus it dared not simply start to attack him.

But the closer Luo Yuan got to the giant creature, the more he noticed the hostility in its eyes getting stronger and its loyalty level also slowly declined.

60.... 60.....

Luo Yuan was sweating... he was nervous. He firmly held onto his knife. In any case, if the lizard really started to attack, he had the firm intention to kill it. The creature was getting irritated and kept growling repeatedly in an attempt to scare Luo Yuan away. Due to its evolution, those growls actually generated powerful sound waves which had an effect on Luo Yuan.

Everyone was alerted by the loud sounds of the giant lizard and rushed to check it out. Huang Jiahui almost fainted after seeing the intense scene.

"Let's go upstairs and bring the cannon down!" Huang Jiahui suddenly got to her senses and quickly shouted.

Huo Dong, Lin Xiaoji and Chen Xianfeng quickly ran to the second floor. The cannons were considered medium-sized weapons. Ordinary people could hardly move them, however, their strength had been increased because they had consumed mutated meat over a long period of time. This type of cannon was somewhat rare. Even Huang Jiahui as an ex-police officer, had not seen it before.

Fortunately, it was not too complicated to use and after brief discussions, they had set up the cannon in front of the shelter ready to shoot the giant lizard.

"Calm down, take a deep breath." Huo Dong murmured with his hands trembling. Sweat could be seen dripping down his face.

Luo Yuan remained calm and slowly took out of his long knife. The giant lizard felt threatened by this and breathed heavily with white smoke coming out from its nostrils. It was 6-7 meters in height but Luo Yuan was only 167cm tall. It could easily tackle him down and eat him, however, it slowly moved backward. In contrast, Luo Yuan kept walking towards it with heavy footsteps. He raised his left hand and pressed on the giant lizard few times. This was a fairly familiar gesture to it as it had been suffering from pain in order to remember this gesture.

"Get down." Luo Yuan ordered.

The giant lizard looked at Luo Yuan with hesitation and stayed stationary for a while. However, it eventually slowly lowered its head and lied down on the ground. Luo Yuan could tell that its hostility level had increased even more at that point. He walked next to it and touched its head but in the next second, he punched its head hardly with his fist. Its loyalty level had dropped down to 45 from 61 by this point and it looked angry. The lizard opened its mouth to shoot a flame of fire at Luo Yuan. The temperature was not too high but it was extremely powerful and the road was damaged with a one-meter burn mark.

Nevertheless, it was dizzy again and almost fainted as Luo Yuan stood on its head with his hands tightly clutching on its horn while repeatedly punching its head over and over again. "It is too late for you to beg for forgiveness. If I don't take this chance to give you a hard lesson, you will forget about it again." After synthesizing with the Heart of the Ghost Tree, he now had a will power of 15 points. Even though the giant lizard has a strong defense, it couldn't match Luo Yuan's attacks. The lizard was getting dizzy and its body started wobbling.

Third punch, fourth punch... Tenth punch, eleventh punch...

When it came to the fifteenth punch, the giant lizard finally collapsed. It sobbed and begged for mercy. Luo Yuan sneered and continued the punch, "It is too late now to beg for mercy, if I don't do it you will forget about it in future." The giant lizard tried to resist, but soon it was pressed down by Luo Yuan again. Luo Yuan did not stop punching until he realized that the lizard had no response anymore and already fainted.

He finally stood up and felt relieved. This was a very dangerous move as it was now a dark blue level mutated creature and was very strong. Luo Yuan opened up the properties panel and found huge changes in its loyalty points-which had now increased to 75. This was a number that he had never seen before. It seemed like the lesson had completely wiped the wildness away.

Luo Yuan jumped down from the lizard and noticed the cannon set up in front of the shelter. He was shocked. He knew how powerful the cannon was and luckily they did not use it otherwise they would have killed him along with the giant lizard due to their unfamiliarity with the weapon. Huang Jiahui ran to Luo Yuan with her pale face.

Luo Yuan could feel her body trembling. It was apparent that she was too worried about him. He felt warm and patted her back and softly said, "I am alright. Don't worry."

After a long time, Huang Jiahui finally let go off Luo Yuan. She wiped her teary eyes and said, "It is your giant lizard, right? Why did it attack you just now?"

"I was just trying to test its capabilities out since it has just evolved." Luo Yuan laughed. It was not necessary to tell everyone the truth as it would only create fear. Huang Jiahui looked at Luo Yuan suspiciously. She felt something strange but she did not think further since Luo Yuan looked relax.

"Don't think too much. Since everyone is awake, let's depart

again once the giant lizard wakes up." Luo Yuan quickly interrupted her thinking. They walked back to the shelter.

Huo Dong hesitated but said, "Can I bring the cannon along with me?"

Luo Yuan was stunned and surprised, "Are you able to carry it? It is heavy. You have to bring the bullets as well."

Huo Dong looked at Lin Xiaoji and Chen Xianfeng and said, "Chen Xianfeng, Lin Xiaoji and myself can take turns to carry them and we will not delay the journey."

"I can help too." Ning Xiaoran added with her reddish face. "I am stronger now."

"I can help, too." Cao Lin also said.

Wang Xiaguang looked at Cao Lin in a surprised way. She was shocked with what Cao Lin had just said. Luo Yuan glanced at everyone and could understand what was in their minds. To be honest, Luo Yuan never expected any help from them as they were mostly ordinary humans. He saved them and brought them along because he still had humanity in him despite his evolution. After all, he is strong enough to fight all the mutated creatures thus far and he never needed help from any of them.

Since they offered to help, he was happy to accept their offer. He nodded his head and said, "Alright, let's bring it along with us."

They quickly packed their luggage while Luo Yuan walked outside and kicked the giant lizard but it still had no response. Luo Yuan aimed at its nose and kicked it again. Finally, the lizard woke up. It was about to roar but noticed Luo Yuan standing in front of him. It quickly stood up in fear. Luo Yuan thought that it would not betray him anymore, thus he added the remaining points from yesterday to its agility. It immediately jumped to 15.

The giant lizard seemed to sense something different from the upgrade. It roared excitedly and looked at Luo Yuan admirably. Luo Yuan had never seen this expression before so he quickly checked its loyalty points and it was now at 80! It was a breakthrough!

The system then prompted, "After a long time, finally, you own the ability to train a mutated creature". On the properties panel, it showed "Skill of training mutated creature: 0" at the last line of the capabilities page.

Luo Yuan was surprised. He never knew there was such a skill. It must be one of the reasons that there was a spike in the loyalty points of the giant lizard. However, it was somewhat useless to Luo Yuan since there was no need to retrain the lizard anymore with its current high level of loyalty. He reassigned the capability of the giant lizard by moving 5 points away from its biting skill. The system then showed: "Proficiency in biting: 0". He hesitated for a while and finally assigned the remaining 4 points to breathing skill. He could foresee that this skill would become the most powerful attack skill it had.

After completely assigning the remaining points, Luo Yuan ordered it to get down again and hung a large parcel on its neck. The poncho from before was almost torn off from yesterday's fight. Luo Yuan synthesized it with the Storm bird's feather so that it would be much more durable.

Luo Yuan turned his head and saw Huo Dong and the gang carrying the cannon with 3 boxes of the bullets. They looked exhausted. He shook his head and offered to help, "Well, you can't walk too far carrying all these, come on, bring one of the boxes over and put it inside"

Luo Yuan took down the parcel from the lizard's neck and opened it. Chen Xianfeng appreciated it and ran over. However, when he came closer to the giant lizard he felt uneasy, so he slowed down and walked gently toward Luo Yuan. Luo Yuan wanted to put the bullets into the parcel but he thought that it could cause a severe loss if the bullets exploded. The poncho might not be torn but all the materials inside would be destroyed. He took out another poncho and synthesized it with some extra feathers. He then hung two parcels on the neck of the giant lizard.

The two parcels collectively weighed about 200 kg but it felt like nothing to the giant lizard as it could actually bear a weight of more than 10 tons. After two hours, they finally got out from the shade of Heaven's Pillar Tree.

Suddenly, the ground tremored. Luo Yuan looked around and found that it was not only the area around the Heaven's Pillar Tree but the entire east of the city that was shaking. He could see several buildings in the distance begin to collapse. Smoke and

ashes surrounded the city from afar.

It was the first time they witnessed such a strong shake with at least a magnitude of 4. The giant lizard was irritated by the tremors and the mutated birds also flew away from the Heaven's Pillar Tree. They could hear mutated beasts roaring from where they were standing and there were a few gigantic mutated birds flying in the sky. Luo Yuan was worried just looking at all these scenes.

"What just happened? What is wrong?" Luo Yuan was confused. This magnitude of tremors could not have been caused by the big tree. He felt insecure and worried seeing all these abnormalities.

Chapter 129: The Great Migration

The ground was shaking vigorously and it felt as though a thousand army men on horses were charging towards them. Countless mutated beasts were fleeing the bushes while the sky was eclipsed by a huge group of mutated birds. Luo Yuan naturally looked in the direction of the gigantic tree and was shocked by this sight.

There were a lot of high-temperature geysers around with vapor gushing out which shot up to a few hundred meters in the air accompanied by a lot of smoke. The ground tremored with a moderate frequency as a burnt smell quickly filled the air.

“It smells like someone is burning Sulphur.” Ning Xiaoran said uncertainly while looking at the mutated beasts moving around frantically on the ground as well as in the sky.

“Sulphur?” Luo Yuan was surprised when he heard the chemical being mentioned.

“Gosh! Could this be a volcano!?” The thought suddenly struck him as he was thinking of where the smell of Sulphur could come from.

Suddenly, the Heaven's Pillar Tree shook vigorously for a few seconds. Luo Yuan looked at the tree and realized that all its leaves had turned yellow.

He thought to himself, “Oh no! Don't tell me it's going to

collapse.”

“Run!!! Everybody, run!!!” Luo Yuan immediately shouted to his team members.

Upon Luo Yuan’s instruction, everyone kept running without looking back. Most of them were still carrying their weapons with them which slowed them down as they were heavy. Wang Xianguang was still weak and eventually stopped after a few hundred meters. She was quite far behind but fortunately Luo Yuan looked back to check if everyone was alright. He sprinted towards Wang Xianguang and carried her on his back.

Wang Xianguang felt ashamed that she needed to be carried. After resting for a few minutes, she felt fit enough to continue running again and said softly, “Put me down please, I can run by myself.”

“Stop fooling around.” Luo Yuan replied and smacked her buttocks with some force. Wang Xianguang got shocked by his response and kept quiet after that.

Within a few minutes, everyone managed to escape from Heaven's Pillar Tree. Most of them were holding their knees for support and gasping for air while some of them had already sat down on the ground to rest. Luo Yuan put Wang Xianguang down and she quickly tried to tidy up her messy hair. At this point, no one paid any attention to her.

“Aurora! This region is not supposed to have an aurora!” Huang Jiahui shouted in surprise. The clouds were moving rapidly

accompanied by a few beams of colorful lights.

“The volcano is due to erupt soon! Look! The smoke is getting darker and thicker!” Lin Xiaoji said this while pointing in the direction of the Heaven's Pillar Tree.

“Oh f*ck! The beasts are coming!” Huo Dong was frightened when he looked the other direction.

There were many mutated beasts rushing towards them from the forest in the distance. They knew they could not escape from such a large scale migration.

“Let's head to the outposts!” Luo Yuan instructed them.

Their exhausted bodies instantly felt refreshed under the stress of the life-threatening situation. They tried their very best to run towards the outposts, however, there was a dark blue rank mutated beast running faster than them. More and more beasts started running ahead of them and many were killed by Luo Yuan while some were stepped on by the chameleon.

A minute later, everyone had finally arrived at the outposts. Most of them almost collapsed and Luo Yuan was also seen gasping this time. There were more than 10 mutated beasts killed by Luo Yuan within a minute and one of them was a dark blue mutated beast! Luo Yuan then checked the outposts and killed a few unknown colorful bugs.

There were a few cannons on the second floor and most of them were well maintained with eight boxes of bullets. Luo Yuan glanced through the place and said to the men, "Each of you take a cannon and immediately fire if you see any mutated beasts coming close to us! Use the bullets sparingly. Jiahui, you girls can be their assistants."

"Wang Shishi, you have the most important mission here. Keep a lookout for micro-mutants." Luo Yuan said to Wang Shishi.

Wang Shishi kept nodding her head though her body kept shaking.

"Where are you going?" Huang Jiahui sensed that Luo Yuan had other plans and asked anxiously.

"I'm going out to be the last defense." Luo Yuan replied in a serious tone.

"Be... be careful!" Huang Jiahui knew she could not change his mind no matter what she said.

Luo Yuan nodded and then went down the stairs.

"Current mission: B-Level mission, block the great migration. Mission requirement: Not more than two deaths."

B-Level mission? He had never tried one before. It would seem that if F-Level missions are focused on killing dark blue mutated

beasts, then B-Level missions are to kill even scarier beasts! So far Luo Yuan had not encountered any beast stronger than dark blue rank but he has experienced the horrible momentum from them which was extremely scary.

Luo Yuan walked out from the outpost and saw many mutated beasts rushing over the border. He quickly opened his status panel and assigned all five of his technique points to 'knife skill'. As usual, a lot of information and knowledge crept into his mind instantly. He closed his eyes and tried to absorb as much of it as he could.

“Knife Expertise: 19” The system sent him a notification.

He was now just one step away from a higher phase. He slowly opened his eyes as the momentum upon him began to fade. It seemed to have ended more quickly than he expected which made him think that perhaps his new skills could not be fully utilized due to limitations from his other skills. “Does this mean that I can only perform at a level equivalent to having 15 points even though my expertise is 19 points?”

“Boom!” A lot of blood gushed out from the body of a dark blue mutated beast when it got hit by the bullet from a cannon. None of them had used that kind of weapon before and they were mentally stressed at that moment. Unfortunately, their bullets would be depleted soon if they could not overcome their fear.

Luo Yuan frowned and became very serious. A lot of the beasts came out from the forest and rushed towards him. Surprisingly, there were also two gigantic dark blue mutated beasts who

emerged from the forest and they kept stomping on low ranked creatures throughout their deadly escape.

Chapter 130: Dying

The giant lizard became frustrated and insecure. It continued roaring loudly. Fortunately, it was extremely loyal to Luo Yuan, otherwise, it would have certainly joined the huge group of beasts that escaped. Luo Yuan was feeling extremely uncomfortable and filled with tension as he observed the massive pack of mutated beasts.

A huge hairless gorilla with an awful body scent was rushing towards Luo Yuan after it had evaded the lizard. The gorilla was hunting for its next meal, but it never imagined that there was something more deadly than the lizard in front of it. Right before it could grab its victim, Luo Yuan had sliced both of its ribcage and heart into two, releasing spurts of blood.

As he gazed upon the horde of beasts, he screamed as he rushed towards them with his knife. He transformed all his fear and anxiety into hatred and began killing them swiftly. There were many different levels of beasts and most of them were dark blue rank. The combined strength of these beasts was enough to destroy a city. However, their speed and agility could not match the knife in Luo Yuan's hand.

Luo Yuan sliced every single beast into pieces with his knife. After the chaos had subsided, everyone looked towards the east and was shocked by what they had just witnessed. No one could imagine that one man was enough to defeat the horde of beasts. Wang Xianguang and Huang Jiahui could only see Luo Yuan in their eyes.

It all looked really easy for Luo Yuan. Every single kill was perfect and flawless. Suddenly, a giant snake which was cut into two attempted to attack him from the back. Luo Yuan was able to sense the danger and quickly avoided its bite before slaying the snake.

The remaining beasts were smart enough to sense the danger before them and quickly escaped. Everyone felt relieved but suddenly heard a gunshot. Luo Yuan turned his head towards the front and saw another group of beasts coming out from the bushes again. It was endless! Many of the white and blue rank mutated beasts were stampeded into squash meat as the beasts were all rushing to escape.

Luo Yuan was drowning in a sea of blood as he slaughtered more than 10 beasts with his knife every second. All the dead carcasses had covered up the road of the highway. Luo Yuan was sweating profusely. He was exhausted and stepped back.

The lizard was attacked by the other beasts. The huge horde of beasts stampeded on it as it was struggling to escape. Luo Yuan was extremely frustrated watching his pet suffer as he could not save it.

Suddenly, bullets rained from the sky and eliminated most of the beasts. When the bullets from the canons had stopped, thousands of dead carcasses could be seen scattered all over the place.

Luo Yuan rushed towards the remaining gigantic beasts and killed all of them. He then walked towards the lizard which was struggling to stand up. It was severely injured but the battle against the beasts was not over. Another group of mutated beasts

could be seen in the distance running towards their direction and the area with the Heaven's Pillar Tree was covered in smoke. Suddenly, a loud sound could be heard. There was a big crack further in front which slowly spread towards both sides of the highway and caused a bigger disorder amongst the beasts.

Luo Yuan felt hopeless about the situation. He was extremely exhausted and started turning pale. He could see that the God of Death was waiting for him. The lizard had also lost its determination to fight.

“Run?”

He suddenly thought of running away by riding on his lizard as it was possible for him to escape and join the migration. However, the circumstances of his decision would mean losing Huang Jiahui, Wang Shishi, and Wang Xiaguang as they would probably die. He was struggling with this difficult decision.

All of a sudden, the cannons came back again just before the beasts were about to hit Luo Yuan. Blood splattered all over his face. “Bloody beasts! I need to kill as many of you as I can before I die!!” Luo Yuan yelled with determination.

The cannons had stopped after a while but the beasts continued approaching. Luo Yuan looked extremely pale and was having difficulty breathing with blood gushing out from his mouth. He was hit several times and was even stepped on by a dark blue mutated beast which caused his ribs to fracture. Luckily, he was able to chop off its legs before being completely crushed.

The outpost was full of cracks due to the continuous attacks by the beasts. Luo Yuan could feel his lungs boiling as he was getting weaker. Suddenly, a dark blue mutated beast appeared and rushed towards him. Luo Yuan panicked, and in a split second was kicked into the air, he could hear his bones crack as he fell onto the ground. He tried to stand up, but could not as he spat out a large mouthful of blood filled with some pieces of his internal organs.

The lizard rushed to rescue Luo Yuan and attacked the dark blue mutated beast to protect its master, who was heavily injured. Unfortunately, it was being stampeded on from the horde of beasts again. Luo Yuan was helpless as he was lying on the ground, unable to move. Wang Shishi and Huang Jiahui immediately rushed out from the outpost. Luo Yuan could not care anymore as he looked towards the sky powerlessly.

“Am I going to die soon? It may not be such a bad thing actually.”

As he lay on the ground and took his final breath, he slowly fell asleep as his heart slowly stopped beating. Suddenly, he could hear another heartbeat. The heartbeat was coming from underground. His soul became captivated by the sound of the heartbeat, as his heart gradually began beating again.

“Lub-dub, lub-dub, lub-dub.”

Chapter 131: The Destiny Of The Heaven's Pillar Tree

Wang Shishi felt as if the world had ended as she witnessed Luo Yuan vomit blood. She stopped thinking and rushed towards him. She was deeply hurt but was unable to cry. In that split second, Wang Shishi had forgotten about everything-fear, death, and even the beasts around her. Unfortunately for her, the beasts continued to run towards Luo Yuan who was lying on the ground. Wang Shishi was in a tensed situation and her power and emotions suddenly exploded together causing her to release a loud roar like a beast!

“Arghhhhhhh!”

An immense power rushed out from her body, instantly spreading everywhere. The wave caused the surrounding sand and stones to fly into the air causing the people who had followed behind her to get injured by her power. Her shuttle came out from her pocket and was elevated up to the sky causing a high pitched sound. In a split second, the shuttle flew down towards the group of beasts and penetrated the head of a wolf-like creature. Its body shook for a second before falling down. The shuttle then continued its attack on the other beasts killing them one by one.

“Arghhhhhhhh!!!”

Wang Shishi kept screaming until her face turned pale. The shuttle continued flying at an intense speed which could not be seen by the naked eye. The dead bodies of the beasts soon formed a hill of carcasses. The remaining beasts stopped moving forward as

they were afraid of Wang Shishi. In this moment, Wang Shishi had become very efficient at killing. She was even more efficient than Luo Yuan.

Suddenly, the ground began trembling vigorously. The earthquake had interrupted her powers, causing her to fall onto the ground. Wang Shishi struggled to get back to her feet. The highway was splitting and some parts of the road had even collapsed.

The earthquake grew stronger and it felt as if the whole world was shaking at this point. Wang Shishi continued to roll on the ground as she was unable to stand up causing her skin to get injured and scratched.

The beasts were facing difficulties as well-the earthquake caused them to stop their migration and they could only roar hopelessly. Smoke continued to fill the air and the leaves of the Heaven's Pillar Tree wilted as they fell. Its trunk was shrinking too.

Something amazing could be seen on the tree though. When its barks fell off, a new layer could be seen inside. It was as if blood could be seen flowing inside the tree itself! The flower buds were growing on the tips from where the leaves had fallen. The tree was evolving! During such a difficult time, it tried to absorb the heat from underground in order to reduce the impact of the disaster. But unfortunately, it could not compete against the power of nature.

A very loud sound came from the sky which sounded like an explosion!

Lava came gushing out from underground and instantly shot up thousands of meters above the sky. The opening of the volcano was just 10 meters away from the Heaven's Pillar Tree and the power of the eruption was massive as it pulled out the Heaven's Pillar Tree together with its roots which were a hundred meters deep into the ground.

The highway was extremely near the Heaven's Pillar Tree as well. Most of the roads had collapsed, including the place where Huang Jiahui was standing at earlier. Luckily, she was able to grab onto a steel bar and hung there, but her hand was injured and continued to bleed. Huo Dong and Ning Xiaoran fell 7-8 meters down onto a bunch of rocks. When the earthquake subsided, Huo Dong slowly stood up and realized that he did not suffer any severe injuries after checking his body. But... the rock under Ning Xiaoran was covered with blood. He quickly shouted, "Ning Xiaoran! Are you alright? Wake up! Wake up, please!"

Ning Xiaoran did not move at all and her face was pale. Huo Dong knew something was wrong. He took a deep breath and turned her body around. He noticed a very sharp stone had penetrated her head and a lot of blood was coming out.

"Wake up!!! Ning Xiaoran!!! Don't die on us!!!" Huo Dong was talking to himself while crying.

Ning Xiaoran was always nice to everyone even after she became evolved. Everyone treated her like their younger sister and no one would have guessed that she would be the first one to leave them.

Luo Yuan already had woken up before the volcano erupted but he did not move an inch even from the intense earthquake. He looked perfectly fine and his heart continued beating normally. His body was recovering slowly. He could feel his legs connected with the earth and a strong energy was transmitted through his legs which moved all around his body.

“Understanding of the Earth.”

“You have obtained a bonus power from the earth-it will give you endless energy and rapid recovery abilities, however, it will consume a lot from your power of sensitivity until it is fully depleted.”

The sound of the system crept into his mind.

Surprisingly, Luo Yuan wasn't excited at all. He observed his surroundings and slowly lifted his leg and let it down again. The ground shook a little but it was not the same as the earthquake. He stopped and thought of something, and repeated his action again. This time the ground did not shake. He realized the earth would not shake as long as he did not step on it following the beat of his heart which was now connected to the earth.

He quickly rushed to Wang Shishi's who had already fainted. Thankfully, she was not injured badly. Luo Yuan carried her to an empty space and found Cao Lin and Chen Jianfeng, as well as Lin Xiaoji. Afterward, he also pulled Huang Jiahui out.

He looked down into another affected area and noticed Huo Dong

was still alive but Ning Xiaoran had passed away. However, he could not feel sad at all. He realized his emotions had faded away making him become extremely rational. He did not manage to help pull Huo Dong up as he had fallen too deep inside.

Everyone was stunned and stared at Luo Yuan. They could not believe that 10 minutes ago he almost died and suddenly he was standing in front of them again perfectly fine. Huang Jiahui was stunned for a second, and then said, “Your... your body...” Luo Yuan shook his head and said, “I’m fine. Get a wet cloth and cover your mouth. There is too much poisonous smoke here from the volcanic ashes. I’m going to find the lizard.”

“But there is no water left.” Lin Xiaoji said.

“Use your urine.” Luo Yuan said coldly as he walked away.

Luo Yuan found the lizard stuck in a big hole. It was struggling to climb out over the thousands of dead carcasses and kept falling back down as the walls of the hole were too steep for its heavy body.

Luo Yuan pushed several big rocks into the big hole and the lizard used the rocks to climb out of the hole. As soon as it escaped, it remained still as it was severely injured and exhausted. Another huge volcano had erupted nearby and lava continued to flow out. The sky slowly became covered with dark clouds and smoke again. The air was filled with choking volcanic ashes and the ground was quickly covered by a thick layer of ashes. The huge Heaven's Pillar Tree had fallen to the ground and perished in the lava.

The beasts began to continue their migration.

Chapter 132: The Smell Of Death

Luo Yuan found a piece of black cloth on the ground covered with dirt and blood stains. At first, he was hesitant to pick it up as it exuded a foul smell. Finally, he ignored the nauseous smell and wrapped half of his face with the cloth.

The most deadly part of the volcanic eruption wasn't the hot and slow-moving lava or the toxic gas in the air. It was actually the ashes that were falling from the sky. Because it is only a few micrometers in diameter, through respiration, the volcanic ashes could easily enter into our lungs causing difficulties in breathing which could eventually lead to death. Even though the sun was up, the entire sky turned dark and gloomy.

Looking at the never ending wave of mutated beasts, Luo Yuan's face gradually became more ferocious. He slowly pulled out his knife from its sheath and in an instant, he sprinted and sliced up the blue level mutated beast which was about to climb onto the highway. Blood splattered all over the place. Luo Yuan continued moving; he quickly ran towards a tiger-like creature and jumped on top of it before it even had time to react. He stabbed through its eye all the way into its skull.

The other beasts began rolling into a ball because of the earthquake. A large number of low-level mutated beasts were trampled on or crushed to death. The never ending wave of mutated beasts became lesser, but Luo Yuan could not relax. Some of the beasts were able to stand up and the weakest among them were the light blue level beasts. The blue level mutated beast had almost become a norm now. Even the more frightening dark blue mutated beasts can be seen everywhere.

The rapid beating of Luo Yuan's heart supplied him with a steady amount of strength. All the wounds on his body and even his fractured bones began to heal quickly. Unfortunately, his range of perception was declining, but his energy should last him at least another half an hour. A lot of mutated beasts started appearing but they were all beheaded by Luo Yuan one by one. This wave of mutated beasts did not pose any threat to Luo Yuan. He even had time to gaze at the volcanoes in the distance.

Sadly, the good times did not last long; a dark blue level mutated beast appeared. This mutated beast was strange as it looked almost like a fish but had four long sturdy legs and some fins. Black moist scales were seen on its body and long stretches of watermarks could be seen on the ground beneath its white belly. It was as though it just recently came out from the water.

The dark blue mutated beast was huge! It was easily more than 10 meters long and eight meters tall, it was even larger than the lizard. Due to its fish-like nature, it had big jaws on its head filled with large steel-like teeth. However, it was clear that the beast was not familiar with walking on land, and thus, it moved very slowly. The size of the beast was enough to easily crush Luo Yuan to death if it was able to move quickly. Luo Yuan noticed that its body and even its tail were covered in scars.

Luo Yuan's expression became serious at that moment. He was not concerned about the huge size of the beast but was worried about the other aspects related to its presence. The creature was obviously a fish which grew limbs that helped it walk on land. Before this, Luo Yuan had never feared the ocean or what horrible species were inside it. To him, the ocean was the ocean, and the

land was the land. They were basically two different worlds. He had never considered anything about the ocean until this creature appeared.

The world was changing and more and more creatures were mutating. Luo Yuan began to move as he noticed the creature struggling to climb up onto the highway. He quietly sneaked close to the fish which had not fully adapted to the land. Its reaction was extremely slow and Luo Yuan was only ten meters away from it. When the fish finally noticed Luo Yuan, it was too late. Luo Yuan quickly trampled on the ground.

“Trampling of the Earth!” He shouted.

Suddenly the ground began to tremor as if an explosion had occurred. Solid concrete floors instantly turned to dust and severe shockwaves could be felt. However, the trampling of the earth did not have any effect on the beast. The high-frequency vibrations did not cause any dizziness to the beast at all; it only caused its body to shake. The beast suddenly stopped moving forward and Luo Yuan took this opportunity to strike. He jumped off from the ground and with his sharp blade he cut through the beast’s head. One-third of its head was cut, and even the brain inside was damaged.

The beast was in unimaginable pain and its tail was struggling fiercely. Fortunately, Luo Yuan had already retreated. It was the first time he had used his power against a dark blue level mutated beast. However, in general, his power would not cause much damage to this creature. In fact, even Wang Shishi’s telekinesis powers were better. During a battle, the slightest distraction could be fatal. Even the slightest pause could easily decide a battle.

As time went on, more and more mutated beasts stacked in front of Luo Yuan. The beasts were strong as most of them struggled but had not died. Many of the beasts saw their friends slaughtered and quickly ran away. Ten minutes later, the wave of mutated beasts finally stopped completely. Luo Yuan was lucky. Until the very end of the wave, he did not face any level five mutated beasts. Apparently, the difficulty of this task was not assigned to 'b' unless he was going to deal with a level five mutated beast. The system seems to have the ability to predict correctly in this regard. Looking straight ahead with no mutated beast in sight, Luo Yuan felt relieved and was finally able to relax. His heartbeat returned to normal, however, the Earth began to pull away power from his body causing him to almost fall onto the ground.

At this moment, the system prompted a message:

B-Level tasks: blocking the beast's wave. Requirement: Only two deaths allowed. Mission completed. Time length: 3 minutes, mission evaluation: good”

“Character: Luo Yuan”

“Completion Rate: 3%”

“Reward-Based Experience: 603”

“Evaluation: Good, experience value: 803”

“Total Experience: 18603400”

“Mutated beasts: The Forest Chameleon”

“Completion rate: 10%”

“Reward-Based Experience Points: 6010”

“Evaluation: Good, Experience Points 8010”

“Experience: 6260”

His experience points increased by a large margin, but Luo Yuan was not satisfied. If he could choose, Luo Yuan would have preferred not to do this kind of mission. ‘B – level’ difficulty is far beyond his limit. If it was not for his good fortune in understanding the Earth’s pulse, he would have been dead by now.

Volcanoes kept erupting in the distance which accumulated a thick layer of ashes on the ground. Luo Yuan could hardly stand properly at this point and Huang Jiahui quickly rushed over while coughing.

“Are you alright?” Huang Jiahui said as she continued coughing.

Luo Yuan shook his head. He also had the feeling of wanting to cough as his lungs felt like they were on fire. It was difficult to endure. He noticed more and more volcanic ashes falling to the

ground and said, “We can’t stay here! We must get out of here as soon as possible.”

“But...But...Ahem... ... Where can we go? The road is broken.” Huang Jiahui replied while coughing. She then continued, “The only path left is through the jungle.”

Due to the giant tree collapsing, a large number of roots were pulled out from the ground causing the road to stretch and crack. Therefore, they are unable to use the path on the road.

“Most of the mutated beasts have fled, so perhaps the jungle may be safer to enter.” Luo Yuan replied.

Luo Yuan noticed the outpost had disappeared. His facial expression changed when he realized that their luggage was gone. There were a lot of resources inside, but the most important ones were the tent and drinking water. There was also salt in their luggage and without any salt, over a long period of time, their bodies would become weak. He could accept if everything else had disappeared but the salt was vital for their survival.

He quickly asked, “Did you find our luggage?”

Huang Jiahui shook her head and said, “During the earthquake... cough...cough...There was a deep crack in the ground...Everything fell into the cracks and I could not find it anymore.”

“Take me there and let me have a look. I might be able to retrieve

it.” Luo Yuan was being unreasonable because the luggage was too important to him. Even if it was deep inside the cracks, he still intended to get it back.

Luo Yuan went to observe the crack. In his desperation, he found it impossible for them to escape. The crack was huge and wide! It was dark and bottomless, so he threw a stone down to check its depth. The sound of the stone colliding with the rock walls echoed. Even though Luo Yuan has good hearing, the echoing sound grew softer and softer until he could not hear it anymore. He could not tell where the bottom was! The only way was through the jungle, but without tents or drinking water, Luo Yuan simply could not imagine what kinds of threats they would encounter next.

He wanted to scream out loud but manage to suppress it. The crowd behind him were coughing uncontrollably to the point where Wang Xianguang even started coughing out blood. Everyone was coughing with tears coming out of their eyes, frightened, with a strong scent of death.

Chapter 133: Endless Forest

Wang Xianguang had lived a good life so far. She never actually encountered any mutated beasts above light blue rank and had never starved like this before. Her body was clearly the weakest among all of them-unable to adapt even though she only inhaled very little volcanic dust.

Luo Yuan was terrified by the fact that she kept puking blood but he became enraged when he noticed all of them using dry cloths to cover their mouths. “What’s going on? Didn’t I say to soak the cloth with water? Even if you don’t have water, you should still have urine! Just look at the situation now!”

Everyone regretted not listening to Luo Yuan earlier.

“Forget it. It’s too late. Just use blood! We can’t stay here anymore, we need to leave as soon as possible,” Luo Yuan ordered.

The place lacked everything but blood and bodies now. Everyone soaked their cloth with blood and covered their noses and mouths with them. The strong stench of copper was nauseating yet no one dared to let go of the cloth in order to survive. Luo Yuan did the same, tying the ends of the cloth into a knot at the back of his head.

Wang Xianguang gradually looked worse. Her coughs got more erratic and she could no longer stand up straight. Luo Yuan was worried beyond words! He quickly ran towards to the defeated mutated fish and gathered a few catties of blood from its wound.

Its blood is immensely nourishing and drinking large amounts of it could hopefully save someone from death. Luo Yuan ignored Wang Xianguang's protest and made her gulp down the liquid. Her cheeks finally regained some color.

He then carried her, withstanding the agony of his barely recovered bones, and walked towards the lizard.

After about ten minutes of rest, the lizard had gotten better. It stood up shakily upon seeing Luo Yuan. Luo Yuan made it stay down again and got up to its back with much difficulty. He then asked everyone to get on it as well.

While all of them were initially terrified of the lizard, they did not care too much about it now. Volcanic debris rained like snow on them-each as large as a basketball. They knew that only death awaited them if they stayed.

It was extremely difficult for a normal person to get up on the giant lizard's back. It was about 6 meters tall when standing and even when lying down it was still about 3 meters! Its body is also smooth and slippery. If Luo Yuan did not pull them up to the lizard's back, it was possible that none of them could get on there on their own.

The lizard's back had gotten much wider after evolving but it was still crowded after so many people had gotten on it. Plus, it was actually very slippery for them. All of them held onto each other, afraid that they would fall off.

“We’re missing one person. Huo Dong is still at the collapsed area,” Huang Jiahui pulled Luo Yuan’s elbow and said anxiously.

Luo Yuan had the intention to leave him behind as Wang Xiaguang’s condition was getting worse by the second. But he could not ignore his conscience and let someone die just like that. He looked at the semis-conscious Wang Xiaguang and stroked her cheek before saying, “Wait for me for another minute.”

“Return quick!” Huang Jiahui said worriedly.

Luo Yuan nodded and sprinted towards Huo Dong.

Huo Dong covered his nose and mouth with his sleeve and paced back and forth in the pit like a trapped beast.

The highway was elevated by large cement pillars which were about 5 meters tall but other than a few crumbled pillars, he had nowhere to climb. He had tried to climb up one of the pillars near to the surface but each time he got to the top, there was no place else to climb as the pillar was at least 2 meters away from the road.

He looked at Ning Xiaoran’s body and felt anxious, “Will anyone come to save me?”

Realizing that the wave of beasts had disappeared for a while and there were no other significant dangers, he felt abandoned by his team. He wanted to scream but he physically could not due to the

volcanic ashes that entered his lungs and the trauma he was enduring.

Hopeless, alone, anxious, and restless!

All sorts of negativities were driving him nuts. He had not foreseen a day when he would be this weak and hopeless. Not even when we witnessed the incidents that happened earlier today.

“Maybe they all died...maybe they...already left,” Huo Dong spoke to himself with a pathetic smile on his face.

He laughed and cried as tears of despair ran down his face. Just then, hurried footsteps could be heard from above. Huo Dong listened in shock and raised his head to see a familiar face greeting his eyes, “Grab on to this. I’ll pull you up. Hurry!”

One end of a long colorful snake was thrown down by Luo Yuan.

Huo Dong nodded his head and could feel moisture in his eyes. He grabbed on to the snake’s tail tightly, ignoring the goosebumps he felt holding it.

With some effort, Huo Dong was pulled out of the pit by Luo Yuan.

Before the apocalypse, Huo Dong was a very successful man. He was very diplomatic in social relationships but rarely experienced being touched by someone even with all his life experience. Yet

this time, his heart was genuinely touched.

It was an era of information explosion before the apocalypse, and loyalty had been an unfamiliar word to most people. Huo Dong had always been respectful towards Luo Yuan but all that had been for selfish reasons. If Luo Yuan died or if he met someone stronger than Luo Yuan, he would probably leave without hesitation and guilt.

But this time, he was ready to give his life for him.

The lizard moved slowly due its gigantic body but its speed was still around 10 meters per second if the distance of each of its steps were taken into account. They gradually moved further and further away from the volcano.

Luo Yuan was inspecting something about 30 centimeters wide while sitting on the lizard's back. This was from the bark of the Heaven's Pillar Tree. He found it on the way to save Huo Dong. The bark was about 20 centimeters thick and appeared to have a rough texture on its surface.

It looked rough but was actually very smooth when touched. This small piece of wood weighed about 40 catties and was probably heavier than ordinary metal of the same size. What was even more surprising was the item's level.

It was not blue nor light green. It was of a green rank!

Luo Yuan did not expect the mutation to be this fast. He thought light green was already the highest level at the moment but the piece of bark he retrieved caused him to rethink.

It was fortunate that this was just a piece of the Heaven's Pillar Tree and was not the Ghost Locust Tree. If that had been the case, they would not be alive right now.

He started to look for the tree again. The lava had almost completely engulfed it with only some branches still visible. It was unbelievable that the branches were not on fire. They were just shrinking rapidly from the effect of the lava.

The shriveled branches were even redder than heated metal as they got smaller and smaller under the high temperature. The weird phenomena of the tree shriveling gave Luo Yuan the feeling that the tree did not actually die yet but was gathering all its essence to fight the lava's high temperature. Perhaps not too long later, a new Heaven's Pillar Tree would reappear at the very same spot.

He did not bother to think too much because he would be long gone by then. Luo Yuan had one last look and turned back to his team to ask, "How's Xianguang?"

"Quite stable now that she's drank some of the fish's blood. But the volcanic debris that she inhaled earlier would probably give her breathing difficulties later since we can't cleanse her lungs with our situation right now," Huang Jiahui said with Wang Xianguang in her embrace.

“Maybe she’ll get better as her physique gets stronger,” Luo Yuan said grimly.

The body’s natural defense is stronger for people with stronger physiques. This was why the giant lizard could breathe normally even when it inhaled more debris than anyone else. Luo Yuan and Lin Xiaoji were in the same position. They only felt itchiness in their lungs but it did not make them feel like coughing.

“The ashes are everywhere! When will they be gone!?” Wang Shishi asked weakly as she laid in Luo Yuan’s embrace.

She really performed beyond Luo Yuan’s expectation this time. Wounds were everywhere on her body as her power was completely exhausted from the fight. She also had a splitting headache.

Luo Yuan stroked her head dearly and comforted her in a soft voice, “It’ll all be okay when we enter the forest. Leaves have strong cleansing properties. They will suck all the dust including the volcano debris. We can breathe normally once we’re inside.”

Wang Shishi could feel the obvious shift of Luo Yuan’s attitude. She smiled weakly and a sweet feeling filled her heart.

Luo Yuan looked towards the front and saw an endless forest with seas of leaves that had formed an intricate web of green. It seemed unusually quiet as most of the mutated beasts had left the place from the volcanic eruption.

The forest rustled as wind blew around the area. The giant lizard growled valiantly and raised its head to announce its arrival when it stepped foot into the forest.

Chapter 134: The Cave

The light dimmed when they entered the forest. The leaves above them blocked all the sunlight, creating a chilling atmosphere.

The forest had looked dense on the outside, but there were many paths inside it made by countless beasts walking through. No weeds or moss grew on those paths.

There were fallen trees on both sides of the road from the earlier beast wave. Blood and bones remained on the ground, but there were no bodies in sight. Countless ferocious beetles scampered away from the bones as the giant lizard approached.

Luo Yuan's heart grew heavy at the sight. The volcano eruption had not chased away all the creatures living in the area. Those of them who had reacted slower to the danger were still there.

The giant lizard moved forward, following the wide path. All sorts of strange-looking trees, rattan, and colorful fungi could be seen along the way.

Everyone looked around curiously, petrified.

Animals had mutated in waves upon the apocalypse, all species multiplying as they mutated in all sorts of directions.

Most of the species had been eliminated by the competition while those who had survived continued evolving, the cycle going on and

on.

Traces of civilization could be seen everywhere on the ground, a constant reminder that this had once been human territory.

As the lizard moved, their surroundings remained quiet, except for the occasional rare mutated creature and some insects squeaking and hissing.

Two hours later, the sky was completely dark. When Luo Yuan checked his watch, he realized it was only 3 p.m. Usually, there would still be another 2 to 3 hours before sunset, yet now it was already dark.

This was not just because the dense forest was blocking the light, but also because the debris from the volcano eruption had blocked the sun.

Luo Yuan tapped the lizard's shoulder. The lizard lay down, and Luo Yuan jumped off, taking the unconscious Wang Xianguang with him.

The rest of them mimicked him. Most of them ended up falling, their legs giving out beneath them. The dark blue lizard's aura had weakened them after riding on it for such a long time.

Luo Yuan checked out the area with Wang Xianguang in his arms. The ground was flat and there were no traces of buildings. It had probably been a farmland before.

Unbeknownst to them, they had already left the outskirts.

Too bad that the map had been lost along with their luggage, making it impossible to determine where they were. They seemed to be lost, but Luo Yuan guessed that they were not far from the highway. He looked towards the north, but he could not see anything.

Huang Jiahui stepped on a small bug that had been trying to climb onto the back of her leg. It cracked with a light firecracker noise. She retracted her leg with a frown, “Are we spending the night here?”

It would be difficult to stay overnight in the forest considering they had no tents and there were no abandoned buildings. They would probably die before the next sunrise if they slept without any protection. While the area looked serene, that did not mean that there was no danger. A lot of mutated insects and beasts were still in the forest. Even the smallest bug could cost their lives.

Luo Yuan shook his head. “We better find a cave to stay in for the night. Otherwise, we’ll have to dig a pit, or sleep in a tree trunk!”

Everyone’s heart felt heavy. Their unease was written all over their tired faces.

Sleeping in a deserted forest would have been very dangerous even before the apocalypse, let alone now. Huang Jiahui was starting to regret persuading Luo Yuan to move towards the West.

It was too late to turn back now, though. Only death would be waiting for them if they headed back. The volcano was still erupting; moving on was their only hope.

Luo Yuan retrieved his sword and walked into the forest carefully. He chopped and cleared the branches along the way easily. About ten minutes later, as they were passing by a small hill, he suddenly stopped. There was a cave there, camouflaged by thorny vines and leaves. It was easy to overlook. There were no footprints near it. They would have totally moved on if Luo Yuan had not sensed that it was there.

It was hard to understand animal intelligence. Animals would usually do astonishing things on instinct, following the cruel laws of nature. Not doing so would mean extinction. As a result, this cave was better hidden and safer than any manmade cave.

The entrance of the cave was only about 1.5 meters tall and 70 centimeters wide. One had to crouch to enter, but there was nothing else they could do. It was already getting late. Their only other option was sleeping in tree trunks, which would only result in a sleepless night.

“You guys wait here. I’ll go in and see,” Luo Yuan said.

Not waiting for a reply, Luo Yuan crouched down and entered the cave. It was pitch black inside, and there was also a strange scent. It smelled like fish and rotting corpses – it was absolutely nauseating. The cave wall was smooth, and the inside of the cave was winding as it extended under the ground. Luo Yuan almost ran out of patience. He had to walk for several hundred meters before

he discovered a space a few dozen square meters in size.

Bones were piled right in the middle of it, but the spot was very clean. Soft, fluffy straw covered it and judging by the obvious dent in the middle, that must have been where the previous resident of the cave had rested.

Luo Yuan announced that it was safe, and everyone entered the cave. Their exhausted faces finally broke into smiles when they saw the spacious inside under the weak light of Huo Dong's lighter.

“Yay! I can't believe we were able to find such a place! I thought we would have to sleep in tree trunks!” Wang Shishi said excitedly. Her spirits were even higher than when they had first moved into the villa. As for the creepy bones and the disgusting stench, those things were nothing compared to being able to rest overnight in a safe place.

“Tree trunks are too dangerous. Did you see all those bugs along the way? I get goosebumps just looking at them. If Boss Luo didn't beat them off, we might have gotten bitten,” Huo Dong said with a smile.

“It's too dark here. Huo Dong, you and Lin Xiaoji go out and find some dry leaves and branches. We'll start a fire later!” Luo Yuan said, indifferent to Huo Dong's pandering.

They both walked out with their blades without hesitation.

“Won’t there be too much smoke if we start a fire?” Huang Jiahui asked when the two of them had left.

“No, there’s no wind in here. The smoke will be okay if we start the fire near the entrance of the cave. It could even stop small insects from coming in,” Luo Yuan replied before he sat down.

As he started to relax, the pain made him break out in cold sweat. He could not take it anymore.

“Brother Luo, are you okay?” Cao Ling asked once she noticed that something wrong with him.

Luo Yuan shook his head with his eyes closed. “I’m fine. Just let me rest for a while.”

Looking at Luo Yuan’s pale face, everyone felt guilty for having him lead the way. He had gotten rid of every danger along the way, but it was obvious that he had sustained some serious injuries.

“Let’s keep our voices down, and let Luo Yuan sleep for a while,” Huang Jiahui said softly with tears in her eyes.

“I’ll go out and find some food!” Chen Xianfeng said uneasily, noticing that he was the only man around.

Huang Jiahui was stunned. She had not expected Chen Xianfeng to be so brave. Considering the danger, she said, “Wait a bit. We’ll go together when Huo Dong and Lin Xiaoji return.”

Chen Xianfeng was not used to talking to beautiful women. His face flushed and he lost the ability to speak.

Huo Dong and Lin Xiaoji returned later with a bundle of branches each, leaving them at the front part of the cave. Lin Xiaoji had even brought a beheaded frog as big as a basket. He was holding it in his right hand.

“We got lucky, I saw the frog in the bushes. I chopped its head off fast, otherwise it would have run away,” Lin Xiaoji said in a bragging tone with a smile.

“Don’t speak so loud, you’ll wake Brother Luo,” Wang Shishi said in dissatisfaction. “This frog is too small. There won’t be much left if we divide it among everyone here.”

Lin Xiaoji’s expression hardened, but he did not argue with Wang Shishi. Noticing Luo Yuan, who was leaning against the wall, he asked, “Has Brother Luo fallen asleep? I’ll go out to find more. I can’t let everyone starve!”

“It’s too dangerous outside. Let’s all go, except for Wang Shishi and Cao Ling. We can look out for each other!” Huang Jiahui said as she pulled out her pistol.

“Sister Huang, let me come too. I feel better already.” Wang Shishi stood up weakly.

Huang Jiahui knew that Wang Shishi was good at telekinesis. They would be much safer if she followed, but thinking of Luo Yuan's safety, she rejected her offer, "You can't go. You have to take care of your Brother Luo. You can handle it if there's any danger."

Wang Shishi realized this, and after her initial fear, she agreed. Luo Yuan was the most important person to her after all.

Cao Ling wanted to speak up, but she kept quiet. She was the weakest out of them. What else could she do other than stay back?

Wang Xianguang woke up not too long after everyone had left. She coughed a bit and tried to sit up.

Cao Ling went over to lend her a hand. "Are you up?"

"Luo Yuan? Where's Luo Yuan?" Wang Xianguang asked anxiously, her voice raspy. "Where am I? Why is it so dark?"

"Brother Luo's tired, he's fallen asleep. Let's lower our voices so we don't wake him up. We're in a cave. Everyone else has gone to find food, but they'll be back soon," Cao Ling answered with a sigh.

"Sister Wang, what's your relationship with Brother Luo?" Wang Shishi suddenly asked.

Wang Xianguang was a little uncomfortable knowing that Wang

Shishi was there too. She had heard her voice, and she tried hard to maintain a calm tone as she answered, “We were colleagues, but we’re very close. You look young, how old are you?”

“I’m the youngest one here, I’m only fourteen!” Wang Shishi said smugly.

Disbelief was written all over Cao Ling’s face.

Wang Xianguang’s reaction was the same. She had not expected Wang Shishi to be this young. She had thought that she was at least sixteen or seventeen, maybe even eighteen. She quickly asked, “Does Luo Yuan know you’re this young?”

Wang Shishi was not stupid. She knew what she meant and she said without a care, “Brother Luo knew it all along. So what? I like him!”

“How could he?” Wang Xianguang said to herself, unable to believe it. The image she had of Luo Yuan was collapsing.

Luo Yuan had only been resting his eyes. He could not take it anymore, so he coughed. His face was a little flustered, but luckily no one could see, otherwise his image would be hurt. He changed the topic, addressing Wang Xianguang, “You’re awake! Are you feeling any better?”

Wang Xianguang turned around. She didn’t want to acknowledge him, but she did not feel right ignoring him either. Finally, she

said quietly, “Don’t worry, I’m much better!”

“You’re too weak. Drink some more high-level beast blood later, will you? You should be fine after a few days,” Luo Yuan said, looking concerned.

“Brother Luo, don’t you want to sleep? Did we wake you?” Wang Shishi was jealous. She didn’t like watching Luo Yuan talk to Wang Xiaguang the moment he woke up, so she changed the topic again.

Luo Yuan blamed her in his heart. It was her fault he’d had to wake up. He glared at her, but Wang Shishi didn’t notice. Then he said, “I wasn’t sleeping anyway. How are you now, still having a headache?”

“Much better already, but my head is still pulsing like it’s about to explode. Why don’t you massage it for me?” Wang Shishi spoke in her sweet voice. She looked like she wanted to show off to someone.

Luo Yuan noticed Wang Xiaguang’s upset expression, but just as he was about to get angry, he was reminded of how Wang Shishi had risked everything to save him. His voice softened, “You want someone injured so badly to massage you? Cao Ling, you massage her, please!”

Cao Ling stood up obediently.

Wang Shishi had forgotten about Luo Yuan’s injuries. She

quickly said, “Sister Cao, there’s no need. I’m okay.”

Hearing that Luo Yuan was injured, Wang Xianguang felt both pain and worry. She bit her lips in an effort not to say anything.

Soon, everyone came back. Other than Chen Xiaofeng, who was carrying something wrapped in a couple of leaves, everyone else carried nothing but bundles of firewood.

Huo Dong lit up the dry leaves and added some firewood, illuminating the cave in an instant.

“You didn’t find anything to eat?” Luo Yuan asked.

“You’re awake!” Huang Jiahui said in concern before she sighed, “There aren’t many animals out there. There’s nothing edible, except bugs. We found some cocoons on some trees, but we don’t know if they’re safe to eat.”

“Let me have a look at them,” Luo Yuan said.

Chen Xiaofeng quickly passed the contents of his hands over. There was a total of nine cocoons of the same insect. Each of them was the size of a palm, and their surface had some complex pattern. Luo Yuan took one and extracted a scary-looking pupa with his sword.

He used Identification discreetly before he said, “They’re totally edible. Nothing to worry about. Hand the frog over, too,” he said.

Extra caution was always necessary when dealing with food.

He used Identification once more, and shook his head. “You can’t eat this. Your body will go numb. Throw it away!”

Everyone was surprised. Luckily, they had not eaten it yet, or who knew what could have happened. They thought Luo Yuan could identify food toxins, so they did not suspect a thing. Only Lin Xiaoji looked a little upset. After all, the food he had caught with so much effort had turned out to be poisonous.

Chapter 135: Maggots

Cao Ling was woken up by the cold in the middle of the night. The cave was pitch black when she opened her eyes. Only some sparks were left among the ashes.

The loud roar of lightning and thunder came from outside as cold, moist wind blew through the cave's entrance. Judging by the sweet moisture in the air, it had to be raining.

She was cold and hungry, her body trembling even though she was hugging a bundle of straw.

She could not stand it anymore. She got up carefully to start another fire.

It was quiet inside the cave as everyone was fast asleep from the day's exhaustion. Even Wang Shishi was snoring lightly.

After searching in the dark for a while, she finally found the lighter beside the bonfire.

The flame flashed in the wind, producing an eerie feeling. She squatted down to light the fire, hands trembling. She tried not to look anywhere, lest she should see something scary.

The light and heat from the fire seemed to bring a huge sense of comfort to her. She sighed in relief, watching the fire grow brighter as she added more firewood.

The cave became bright as day, everyone curling up against the straws like homeless people to keep themselves warm.

Cao Ling's frozen body slowly regained feeling under the fire's warmth. She felt itchy and scratched her arm subconsciously, only to realize that she was scratching her wound when it started to hurt.

Under the light of the fire, she saw something white wriggling on her wound. She thought her eyes had to be fooling her. Her heart tightened as she willed herself to look again.

Countless maggots were wriggling around the wound. It wasn't just her arm. There were maggots everywhere that she had wounds. On her calves, knees, elbows, even on the back of her hands.

She felt completely disgusted. Suddenly, as if thinking of something, she touched her face. It felt slick as the pads of her fingers touched a soft maggot.

No longer able to hold back, she screamed as loud as she could.

Everyone woke up with a start, hands going straight to their weapons as they stood up.

"What's going on?" Luo Yuan jumped up and checked around, not finding anything unusual.

Cao Long could not stop screaming, her hands waving in the air as her body trembled like a sieve.

Luo Yuan walked over and slapped her hard. “Calm down! What’s going on?”

The pain brought Cao Ling temporarily back to her senses, but the fear still remained on her face as she stuttered, “Maggots, maggots everywhere. I’m dying! Save me, Brother Luo, save me!”

Luo Yuan pulled her hand over and checked the back of it with his sharp eyes, sucking in a deep breath as he got goosebumps too. “How can there be so many maggots?”

Everyone crowded over, frightened by the sight. Suddenly, they were all checking their own wounds, women’s screams filling the air. Even the men’s faces turned a pasty white.

Other than Luo Yuan and Lin Xiaoji, everyone had maggots on their wounds. Wang Xiaguang had the most as maggots filled her whole wound, their wriggling motion nauseating her.

Huang Jiahui and Wang Shishi were not any better. Their faces were pale as they screamed.

“Calm down! Everyone calm down now!” Luo Yuan shouted.

Huang Jiahui had not sustained as many injuries and her Physique had not been bad to begin with, so she had the smallest number of maggots. She quickly calmed down and said anxiously, “How could this be? We’ve been injured before, but our wounds were usually fine!”

“Maybe we got in contact with the insects’ eggs when we passed through the forest,” Luo Yuan guessed.

“The forest is too dangerous. I don’t want to stay here anymore. I’d rather die by the volcano debris than let maggots grow all over me!” Wang Shishi shouted, tears spilling from her eyes as she dared not touch her wounds.

“Don’t talk like that. When the volcano debris subsides, we will return to the highway. Let’s deal with this first. We need to take care of the maggots now, before they get more dangerous,” Luo Yuan said seriously. The maggots had already grown to the size of chopsticks, and it wasn’t even midnight yet. Who knew what would become of them if they let this go on any longer. Hopefully, they would not wriggle into any other orifices, or else...

Luo Yuan dared not imagine a stomach filled with them, maggots bursting out of it.

Huo Dong gritted his teeth and poked his finger into his wound. A disgusting slick feeling greeted his finger as he got goosebumps. The shallow wound was deeply rotten, almost engulfing his whole finger. Maggot after maggot, each about 5 centimeters long, were pulled out of his wound and thrown into the fire, the worms cracking loudly as they burned.

Almost a dozen maggots were pulled out of a wound the size of a ping pong ball. The flesh in the wound was like a honeycomb, some of the holes a faint white color. There were obviously still some maggots deeper inside.

Hopelessness flashed across Huo Dong's face as he broke down and hit his wound. Blood and white pus splattered out as a large area around the wound deflated. The inside seemed to have been eaten away.

Everyone watching turned pale. They all felt chilled to the bone.

Luo Yuan's expression changed. He could not keep his calm anymore. He quickly took a hold of Wang Xianguang and placed her on the straw just as she was about to collapse. Her wounds were mainly on her back and calf. The wound on her calf was only the size of a palm, but the surface on her back was larger. Because it was on her back, she could not even see the severity of it.

Luo Yuan felt heavy-hearted. His fingers tried pressing lightly around the calf wound, but the skin dented before much pressure could be applied, the action making the maggots inside wriggle.

Wang Xianguang lay motionless on the straw, her eyes looking up at him hopelessly as she asked in a trembling voice, "Am I going to die?"

"No, you won't. I saved you, I'm not going to let you die," Luo Yuan said decidedly, "I need the sword."

“What are you going to do?” Wang Xianguang asked hurriedly.

“The maggots are not deep yet. You’ll be okay as long as the flesh is cut off,” Luo Yuan replied.

“But then I won’t be able to walk!” Wang Xianguang said.

“I’m not chopping off the whole leg. You’ll just be limping a little,” Luo Yuan said after remaining silent for a while. He didn’t tell her about her back, because he didn’t want her to lose all hope.

“No. Even if I can still walk, I will need to rest a lot. I don’t want to be a burden.” Wang Xianguang bit her lips, tears streaming down her cheeks as she shook her head. “I’m afraid I can’t come to the West with you anymore. I should’ve died anyway. I should’ve died the night my mother committed suicide!”

Her parents’ deaths and the distance between her and Luo Yuan had already made her want to give up. The condition of her body was only the last straw.

Luo Yuan looked at her soulless eyes, a sight all too familiar for him. He had seen it from two different people, both of whom had committed suicide in the end. He was upset. “You’re not a burden. Even if your legs were chopped, I’d still take care of you. You’re still young, there’s a lot of things you have yet to experience. The West is a peaceful place. Our adventure will be over once we get there. We’ll be able to live normally. You must persevere.”

Wang Xianguang's dull eyes suddenly shone, her pale face flushing a little. "You're saying you'll take care of me forever?"

Luo Yuan realized that Wang Xianguang had misunderstood, but he could only go along with it now. "You must keep living. Don't be scared. It'll be okay after the initial pain."

Wang Xianguang's face paled again. "Then be quick!"

"Shout if you're in pain!"

Luo Yuan pulled his sword out and traced it over the wound on her calf repeatedly, his palms sweating. His usually steady hands were now trembling. Just as he was about to dig the blade in, he thought of something. "Lin Xiaoji, can you bring the frog over?"

The frog's flesh and blood had a numbing effect, but it was not poisonous. It was the best kind of anesthesia. Luo Yuan suddenly felt grateful that he had not wanted to move last night, and that everyone else had been too concerned about their safety to go out and throw it away. Otherwise, Wang Xianguang would have had to take the pain now.

Lin Xiaoji quickly brought the frog over.

Luo Yuan opened its stomach. Half a night after dying, its blood had already begun to curdle. He did not need much, only a few drops. He picked up a straw and dipped it with some blood,

dropping the droplets onto the wound.

Suddenly, something unexpected happened.

The maggots seemed to have felt the impending danger, and started wriggling out of the wound in an erratic movement. Soon, the wound was clear. Even the maggots that had wriggled into other orifices had come out.

Luo Yuan was both stunned and thrilled.

The atmosphere suddenly became merry as everyone dropped the frog's blood carefully onto their wounds.

This particular frog seemed to be the maggots' natural enemy. As they came out of the wounds in an effort to escape, everyone either stomped on them in anger or threw them into the fire. A burning smell filled the air, but no one cared.

When they were done venting, the women's mood went down the drain again. Even Huang Jiahui had become quiet. Although the maggots were gone, they had left them with several disgusting wounds that they could not bear to look at. They were afraid that the wounds might leave terrible scars on their skin.

Chapter 136: Absorbing Life

The night was dark.

Lightning stroke and thunder roared in the sky while it rained cats and dogs.

Large raindrops fell on the leaves, making endless noise. They sounded like hurried knocks.

Luo Yuan was drenched as soon as he got out of the cave. The giant lizard lay quietly in the rain, water dripping down its smooth scales and forming a small pond where it lay.

Luo Yuan took a glance at the lizard sleeping soundly under the storm before he charged into the rain. He ran through the forest until he came across a large rock. His sword smashed it in quick strokes, the rock becoming 40 – 50 centimeters in diameter.

Then he chopped a large tree and dug into a section of its trunk, making a simple wooden bucket.

The rain got heavier, raindrops beating down on his face and making opening his eyes a real challenge. He took off his clothes, allowing the storm to wash his battered body. It had been two days since he had last showered, and his body was already smelling of dried sweat and blood.

As he showered, the wooden bucket was filled with rainwater.

Luo Yuan put on his clothes again and returned to the cave, carrying the bucket of water and the stone ball.

The fire in the cave burned bright. Nobody had gone back to sleep, even though dawn had yet to come. Even weak Wang Xianguang was staring at the ceiling blankly. The atmosphere was dull and silent.

Luo Yuan took off his clothes again to shake the water off. The garment was now synthesized with Storm Bird's feathers, so it dried extremely fast, leaving behind no sign that it had ever been in the rain. Luo Yuan put everything on again and cut the stone ball into two pieces. He dug out the inside part to make a large wok, and then placed it above the fire, pouring water inside it.

Huang Jiahui and Cao Ling took over the task, washing all the clothes that they could find.

The flame licked the bottom of the stone wok greedily, boiling the water within minutes. Huang Jiahui boiled all the clothes for several minutes to disinfect them.

When she took them out, the water had turned black.

Huo Dong poured it outside the cave and boiled another pot to wash the clothes until they were white.

Everyone washed their wounds carefully with them, scrubbing the fabric clean and repeating the process. Lin Xiaoji had to bring

fresh water five more times before everyone had finally cleaned their bleeding wounds and wrapped them up.

Considering the lack of medicine during that apocalyptic era, unless the most basic hygienic standards were met, there would be countless deaths.

Wang Xiaguang was the weakest among them. She could not even stand or take care of her own wounds. Huang Jiahui didn't want Luo Yuan to help her, so she did it herself.

After she wiped down Wang Xiaguang and bandaged her wounds, she realized that the girl was shaking. Her lips were a freezing purple color, the back of her clothes was damp, and the straw under her was also wet.

Huang Jiahui flipped the straw. The soil underneath was so damp, it had almost turned into mud. She quickly brought more straw over and put it under her.

Wang Xiaguang looked at the hustling Wang Jiahui. "Thank you!"

Huang Jiahui sighed. Her feelings were mixed. She turned to the corner and poured a bowl of blood Luo Yuan had gathered earlier, handing it to Wang Xiaguang to drink. "Thank Luo Yuan. He asked me to take care of you," she said softly.

Wang Xiaguang's cold body warmed up. She looked better after

drinking the dark blue level blood. She looked at Huang Jiahui in confusion. “Thank you, anyway.”

Huang Jiahui paused for a moment before she walked away.

Moving forward was impossible under the heavy rain. Plus, most of them were injured.

Luo Yuan was only feeling slightly better than the previous day. His body still protested in pain every time he moved too much.

Rain dropped down from the walls of the cave and into the wooden bucket, making an irritating sound.

The cave was getting damper, water coming in from everywhere as the ground turned muddy.

Luo Yuan had inspected the whole cave carefully, but except for a few spots, it seemed to be safe over all. The inside of the cave was not bad, and neither was its location. The soil inside was sticky though, so it did not collapse as easily.

However, this was only one of their problems – they were running out of firewood quickly.

The forest was cold and damp. The weather remained rainy, and moist wind kept blowing into the cave. Most of them would never have survived if not for the fire. They had not eaten much the whole day, so everyone was famished.

Lin Xiaoji went out once, but he did not bring back anything. The insects had long gone into hiding to find shelter from the weather. It would be extremely hard to find their hiding spots considering their survival skills in the wild.

Luo Yuan did not move. He was not their babysitter after all. It was impossible to do everything by himself, and it was not that dangerous outside anyway. It was the perfect time for them to train.

Seeing that Luo Yuan showed no intention of moving, the rest of the men went out in search of food. Around noon, they finally discovered some insect eggs the size of chicken eggs.

The women seemed to have linked the eggs to the maggots, because they paled once again. Cao Ling and Huang Jiahui ignored their disgust and washed the eggs before cooking them in the stone pot. Some of the eggs began to hatch under the rising water temperature, but they were promptly killed as it rose even higher.

During the apocalypse, the perseverance of mankind was no longer the same as before. Everyone ate the eggs despite feeling nauseated. Even Wang Shishi finished hers. In fact, they all realized that the eggs did not taste bad once they tried them. They were almost pure protein. Because they were mutated beast eggs, the flesh was chewy and hard to bite.

Food was as scarce as before, but they were not as hungry anymore.

Luo Yuan toyed with the Heaven Pillar Tree bark hesitantly. No matter how much mutation it went through, the tree bark still consisted of plant fiber, meaning that it was neither flexible nor tough. It was obviously not a very good material for sharp weapons. Its best function was defense.

However, Luo Yuan thought it would be a waste not to try to synthesize it with the sword.

This was Luo Yuan's first time coming into contact with such a high-level material. It was possible that he would not get a second chance anytime soon.

Besides, the sword was getting blunter. It depleted too much of his Willpower whenever he fought against a dark blue level creature, let alone an even more powerful one.

Synthesizing the bark into his sword would probably not increase its sharpness, but it would at least make it more powerful than a dark blue level sword.

Simply put, it was a question of attacking or defending himself.

Luo Yuan thought about it long and hard, and ultimately decided to synthesize it into the sword.

No matter how strong the protection of his clothes was, it would not have much of an effect against mutated beasts. On the other

hand, a strong attacking power would bring more immediate results.

“Heaven Pillar Tree”

“Rarity: Green”

“Weight: 21kg”

“Ability: Energy Absorption”

“Remarks: The Heaven Pillar Tree is a magical being. It can absorb any kind of energy, including life energy, and grow rapidly, regardless of the circumstances. Its surface is tough and its defense is strong. It can absorb a certain amount of energy, and it is a high-level protective material.”

Luo Yuan used Identification once more before he synthesized the bark with his sword under everyone’s watchful eyes.

His ability to synthesize mutated materials into weapons and clothes was no longer a secret. Everyone just assumed it was an ability Luo Yuan had because he was an evolved person, so he did not need to hide it anymore.

Luo Yuan mumbled a quiet ‘Synthesize’, and the tree bark gradually turned a lighter color.

It took far longer than usual to synthesize. Luo Yuan stared at the sword seriously as its dark blue color slowly faded away. A layer of fine dark blue dust floated around the handle as the whole sword burned.

Vapor buzzed wherever the sword was touched by the soil.

Everyone watched the process without blinking, disbelief written all over their faces. No one dared make a sound, afraid to disturb Luo Yuan.

The whole process took about half an hour. Under everyone's astonished gaze, the Heaven Pillar Tree bark turned into dust. Luo Yuan blew the dark blue dust on the sword away, revealing a black sword.

Its black color seemed to be able to absorb light. Even the fire dimmed a little near the blade, giving it a mysterious aura.

Luo Yuan lifted the sword, trying out the feel of it. It was three times as heavy, but it was still manageable with his 13-point Strength. He held the sword with both his hands and slashed through the air a few times.

The air buzzed from the friction of his high speed.

He was moving so fast, nobody saw his arms move. They were already used to it, but their hearts still surged in wonder.

Luo Yuan stopped, panic flashing across his face. He took a deep breath and used Identification on the sword.

“Life Harvesting Sword”

“Material: Alloy, Heaven Pillar Tree Bark”

“Rarity: Green”

“Weight: 15kg”

“Attack: 30 – 34”

“Special Effect 1: Attacking Speed +1”

“Special Effect 2: Life Absorption (Passive), absorbs a certain amount of active energy from the attacker and replenishes the energy of the holder of the sword.”

“Equipment Requirements: 14-point Strength”

“Remarks: This is a Life Harvesting Sword. It will bring you endless energy when you kill your enemy.”

Luo Yuan was delighted. His guess had been right. The sword’s attacking power had only increased by 5 points. That was a complete mismatch to its green level status compared to the

sword's previous level-up pattern. It should have been light green level instead.

Luo Yuan had expected it though. The 5-point increase had already exceeded his expectations.

What made him happy was the life-absorbing ability that had replaced its useless freezing ability. If what he had read was true, this would be an unbelievable ability. He would always be able to recover from his injuries as long as he had an enemy.

Too bad that he could not find any beast outside, otherwise he would have tested the Identification description.

Luo Yuan played with the sword a little more before finally putting it away longingly.

Chapter 137: Dawn

The debris from the volcano eruption poured continuously down on the area.

By evening, the accumulated water in the forest had flooded the cave, so Luo Yuan and the gang had to move once again.

The forest was a flat plane. At such short notice, all Luo Yuan could do was pick a large tree and carve a hole with his sword big enough enough for them to fit in.

Everyone was drenched and freezing. Wang Xiaguang who was already weak because of her injuries, had spiked a high fever by nightfall. Not even dark blue level blood could bring it down.

Luo Yuan was beyond worried, but there was nothing else he could do. He could only leave things to God and Wang Xiaguang herself.

The irritating pitter-patter of the raindrops seemed to never end. Everyone had curled up in the innermost corner of the damp, dark tree trunk, and were watching the neverending darkness outside with blank expressions.

Huang Jiahui hugged Wang Xiaguang tightly, her face pale and cold from sharing her body heat with her.

She did not understand her own actions. She wasn't sure if she

was taking a precaution for Luo Yuan or was actually feeling pity for the girl. Maybe it was a bit of both.

Luo Yuan squatted by the entrance, watching the ferocious flood in a trance. His bones had nearly recovered. Other than some pain in his internal injuries, he felt alright.

However, his mood was not any better. The amount of pressure on him felt suffocating.

The hardships outside could never compare to the comforts of home.

He was already feeling the wear and tear after only a few dozen kilometers. The continuous struggles along the way had brought down the high spirits he'd originally had when they'd left, leaving him both mentally and physically exhausted.

Ning Xiaoran had already passed away. Who would be next? Wang Xianguang?

If she could not hold on and make it through the day, then perhaps... He got an immensely anxious feeling just thinking about it.

“Luo Yuan, come quick! She doesn't look good!” Huang Jiahui called for him anxiously.

Shocked, Luo Yuan quickly turned and felt her forehead. “Why is

she getting hotter?”

Wang Xianguang was red like a cooked shrimp, her body burning at a temperature higher than 40 degrees Celsius and trembling nonstop.

“Where’s the blood? Let her drink some blood,” Luo Yuan said hurriedly.

“There’s no more left. It was finished half an hour ago,” Huang Jiahui said worriedly, “Her wounds are already cankering. It’s probably because of the rain.”

Luo Yuan paced back and forth restlessly, finally speaking after a while, “Clean her wounds again right away. I’ll go get more blood.”

Huang Jiahui pulled on his shirt at once, unease flashing in her eyes. “It’s raining heavily outside. It’s flooded everywhere! What are you going to do? There’s no more beasts around, let alone high-level ones!”

“Don’t worry about me, I’m not going anywhere. The lizard is also a fourth level beast. Its blood will do. You take care of Wang Xianguang, I’ll be back right away,” Luo Yuan said before he jumped out into the rain.

The water reached his thighs as he carefully maneuvered himself forward, sensing the situation in the water.

The giant lizard was not able to sleep like the previous day. It was rather distressed as it had never experienced such a flood. As it saw Luo Yuan heading over, it cried pitifully, delighted to see him. How could it have known that its heartless owner was not there to see to it, but to retrieve its blood?

Luo Yuan approached the lizard and felt around its foot for a crescent-shaped wound that had barely recovered two days ago. The scales there had not grown back yet. Luo Yuan inspected it for a minute before he slashed open the wound once more with his sword.

Blood gushed out from the wound and into the bucket he was holding.

Feeling the pain, the lizard fidgeted before turning its head around and staring at Luo Yuan. It looked like it was feeling wronged and confused.

Luo Yuan did not even lift his head. He was too concentrated on retrieving the blood.

The muscle on the lizard's leg contracted on instinct in an effort to stop the bleeding after a while. Luo Yuan impatiently slashed the wound open again, cutting a gash several dozen centimeters deep.

The lizard let out a wail, but remained unmoving, too afraid of Luo Yuan to resist.

Faintly, he felt a weak warmth flowing into his body. It was so weak, it was almost unnoticeable. He thought it was an illusion at first, but he felt it more distinctly the second time.

“Life absorption! This is life absorption. Damn it, how could I forget?” Luo Yuan slapped himself harshly, immensely frustrated. “If I’d thought of it earlier, Wang Xiaoguang would not have had to suffer so much. There’s still time, though.”

Luo Yuan forgot all about collecting the blood. Carrying the half-full bucket, he rushed towards the huge tree.

“You got the blood?” Huang Jiahui breathed a sigh of relief upon seeing Luo Yuan.

Luo Yuan nodded and put down the wooden bucket. He observed the tree hole, which was about three meters wide and three meters deep. He had almost emptied the middle of the tree. Trees like this had been rare before the apocalypse, but they were a common sight now.

Luo Yuan stabbed his sword into the tree, feeling an even weaker warmth flowing into his body through the handle. No wonder he had not felt it when he’d been digging into the middle of the tree trunk earlier. The weak flow had been too insignificant to notice if he was not focused.

Even though the effect seemed miniscule to him, it would probably be sufficient for a normal person like Wang Xianguang.

He thrust the sword deeper inside while he told Huang Jiahui, “Move Wang Xianguang over. Let her hold the handle.”

Huang Jiahui looked at Luo Yuan in confusion, but she did exactly what he had asked her to. “She’s running a really high fever. Why do you want her to hold that cold handle?”

The good thing about Huang Jiahui was that she could distinguish right from wrong clearly and she had absolute faith in Luo Yuan. Even when she was utterly confused, she would only ask questions after doing what she’d been told.

Everyone else was also looking at Luo Yuan with the same puzzled expression.

Luo Yuan brushed them off, “Let’s see if it works. I’ll think of something else if it doesn’t.”

Huang Jiahui assumed it was some superstitious custom from Luo Yuan’s hometown. He was just doing anything and everything in his power to save Wang Xianguang. She let Wang Xianguang gulp down a few mouthfuls of blood and hugged her tightly.

“Brother Luo, when will the rain stop?” Wang Shishi asked weakly after a while. Her large eyes were bloodshot. She was no longer the high-spirited girl that she once was.

Luo Yuan looked at Wang Shishi and sighed. “Don’t worry, it will

probably stop by tomorrow morning,” he tried to comfort her.

Wang Shishi forced a smile as a hint of disappointment flashed across her eyes. “I miss our house,” she said softly.

Everyone’s expression turned solemn. It was true. Maybe they should not have come out at all. It was better to live feebly counting down each day than to live adventurously with lurking danger everywhere they looked. Life was too fragile for normal people. It was fragile to the point that a small accident in the wild could cause them to die. No one dared state this out loud, even though they were thinking about it.

Luo Yuan looked at the unconscious Wang Xiaguang, speaking after some time, “It’ll be fine once we’re past the hard days.”

Wang Shishi grabbed Luo Yuan’s hand and placed it on her face. She snuggled against it gently, not saying a word.

“Quick, look! Her wounds are healing!” Huang Jiahui suddenly exclaimed ten minutes later, breaking the passive mood.

Luo Yuan pulled his hand away from Wang Shishi and looked at Wang Xiaguang’s calf. The wound seemed to have decreased in size as it began to scab. It was no longer filled with pus. Luo Yuan felt her forehead. While it was still hot, her temperature was no longer burning.

At least her life had been saved, Luo Yuan sighed in relief. It

seemed that it had really worked.

Huo Dong and the other men turned around before Luo Yuan lifted Wang Xianguang's shirt and gently untied her bandage. It seemed that her largest wounds were also getting better.

"How can she be recovering so fast?" Cao Ling asked in bewilderment. She rushed to explain what she had meant before there was a misunderstanding, "I mean, her recovery is not normal. It's impossible for someone to heal like that on their own."

"Maybe she has evolved!" Huang Jiahui said excitedly without thinking. The fact that Wang Xianguang was her love rival had long been forgotten after taking care of her for so long.

"Stop your wild guesses. It's because of the sword. It changed after I synthesized the tree bark into it. It seems like it can absorb energy from other living things to heal injuries. I've only just confirmed it now," Luo Yuan explained everything. The sword could heal any one of them in the future.

The women's eyes radiated with an astonishing glow.

Even Wang Shishi, who had looked lifeless until then, was glowing.

Cao Ling subconsciously touched her hideous left cheek, looking eager.

Huang Jiahui's eyes also glowed with excitement, her gaze burning with passion.

The attention women paid to their looks was something no man could understand. Especially when it came to these women, who had already been beautiful to begin with. The wounds and scars left behind by the maggots had been a huge blow for them.

Luo Yuan's words were like the first ray of dawn after a long night. It had ignited the dying fire in their hearts.

The oppressive atmosphere was gone in an instant, the tight tree hole filling with joy.

Everyone witnessed the miracle of Wang Xianguang's calf wound becoming smaller and smaller, until all that was left was a dark-colored scab. As the fever subsided, the girl woke up. After four hours, the scab came off, revealing fresh, rosy skin.

Seven hours later, the large wound on her back had also healed completely.

It was 3 a.m., but no one was feeling sleepy. Excitement was written all over their faces as rare laughs and jokes filled the air.

What made them even happier was that the rain had finally stopped.

Chapter 138: Nuclear Explosion Aftermath

The rain stopped, but the flood did not subside as fast.

Danger might still be lurking under the dirty waters, so it was clear that they could not make a move just yet. However, everyone's mood seemed to have brightened along with the weather. Even Luo Yuan did not seem as distant, and he surprisingly took the initiative to go find some food.

Actually, there were still many sources of food in the flooded forest as long as you paid attention and could tell what was poisonous.

Luo Yuan found all sorts of weed tubers, some tree juice as sweet as cow milk, random wild fruit and even a large fish.

It had both surprised and delighted him.

He was surprised because the flood had connected all the rivers and lakes, making the water extremely dangerous, and he was delighted because this light blue level fish was gigantic. It could probably last them until the flood subsided.

Luo Yuan dragged the big fish back to the tree hole. The tree was depleted of its energy, its leaves turning yellow in one night.

He had to chop the fish into several parts as it was too large to fit into the hole.

Realizing that he had returned, everyone came out to help. They carried and stacked the parts in a corner, forming a one-meter high stack of meat. Luo Yuan kept the fish skin as it was much thinner and flexible than mutated beast skin, and it was suitable for carrying water or other things.

Huang Jiahui and Cao Ling collected the remaining firewood and started a fire. They were not worried about burning the whole tree down as the hole was still damp from the rain.

Huo Dong carved some stakes from the tree and used them to grill the fish. The smell and sound of the fish cooking in the fire filled the tree with an appetizing aroma.

Huang Jiahui gave everyone about a glass worth of tree juice and saved the rest.

The refreshing taste of the juice had everyone sipping it preciousely instead of gulping it down. The weed tubers tasted good too, their rough texture allowing them to be eaten like rice or fruit.

Everyone stuffed themselves after starving for so long. Even Wang Shishi, who ate the least, had three times her usual portion.

Luo Yuan had more than 10 catties of fish, making up for not eating the past few days. Considering his exceptional physique, he could not be considered a normal person anymore. He could stay in good spirits without eating for days, but could also consume a few days' worth of food in one sitting.

As the days passed, everyone's injuries recovered substantially.

After the third day, the flood had finally subsided, leaving mud everywhere. Some piranha-looking mutated fish were flapping somewhere in the distance, making a last effort to survive.

Huang Jiahui obsessively checked their luggage again and again, only stopping after she'd made sure nothing had been left behind.

They actually did not have much to bring along – several dozen catties of tree juice in fish skin, about a dozen of fish jerky, half a catty per piece, three lighters, personal weapons and bullets, and some clean, worn-out clothes that not even beggars would want to wear.

That was everything.

Luo Yuan was carrying in his rucksack about a dozen short stakes that he had made recently. Before jumping off the tree hole, he pulled out the sword, which had been stabbed into the tree.

The rest of them got on the giant lizard, laying down cautiously on the carpet on its back.

They had not been completely idle the past few days. The lizard's back was now covered with a simple carpet made of rattan skin, so they didn't have to be afraid of slipping off it.

With a low growl, the lizard got up and started moving forward slowly.

Flying insects were everywhere as water accumulated in places while the flood subsided. These insects were smaller than rice, but flew in colonies, looking like mist in the air. They dared not go near Luo Yuan, but they were still killed if they flew too slow.

Luo Yuan had noticed the same thing when they had still been in the tree hole. They had left a tiny hole by the entrance because they'd been concerned about insufficient oxygen supply, but not one insect had flown in during the day or night.

The insects were not trying to avoid him or the giant lizard, but his sword.

Since the sword had evolved to green level, the blade exuded a faint dominance that took a lingering physical form.

However, the dominance was still very weak. Normal people could only feel it once it was honed and razor-sharp, but it was different with insects. That kind of weak dominance was life threatening to them considering their small size, so normal insects dared not go near it.

After half an hour, the trees started to lessen, giving way to the sky. It was still gloomy. Clouds were hovering above, and the sun would probably remain hidden for days as the volcano eruption had brought along copious amounts of debris.

However, that did not stop them from feeling ecstatic.

“We’re finally leaving,” Huo Dong said in excitement.

“I think we’ll be out of the forest in less than ten minutes,” Cao Ling added with a smile.

“I have to find a bed and a blanket, and get a good night’s sleep. The cold kept me awake every night,” Wang Shishi said in her sweet, spoiled voice.

Huang Jiahui smiled quietly. The young girl had suffered these past few days – sleeping outside like in prehistoric times and not brushing her teeth for several days in a row. Thankfully, all this was about to end. The defense fortifications along the highway would have blankets, beds and all sorts of personal hygiene items.

They chatted all along the way, but their smiles were about to be wiped off their faces.

The trees grew less dense as they walked deeper into the forest, but they also got stranger. Their trunks were twisted and had a lot less leaves than normal trees. Most of the leaves had wilted too, making the trees look like abnormal, deformed creatures.

Skeletons of mutated beasts could be seen along the way, most of them were half-buried in the mud. However, as they moved on, the small skeletons were replaced by bigger ones.

It seemed that something had happened there.

Luo Yuan, who was bolder than everyone else, was not surprised or disturbed as easily. As long as no creatures above light green level appeared, he had nothing to be afraid of. He did not stop the lizard from moving forward, even though he did feel a little strange. This route was the closest to the highway. If they went around this area, they would have to walk a lot more to reach it.

About ten minutes later, the trees started to lean in a certain direction. The sight of wilted trees increased, and only a couple of living ones were left. Even those looked strange, though. They had no leaves, and their branches looked like ghostly claws struggling in the air.

Death seemed to permeate the air as their surroundings became eerily quiet. Not even the hissing or squeaking of insects could be heard. Everyone felt like they were on the way to Hell.

The giant lizard was also disturbed. Its nostrils flared with smoke, and it seemed reluctant to move forward.

Huang Jiahui suddenly exclaimed in a shaking voice, “Hold up! Let’s go back. This is where the nuclears exploded.”

Luo Yuan looked shocked. “What do you mean?”

“Don’t you remember? Several atomic bombs were detonated in the wilderness around Hedong City. I’m afraid this is where they

exploded,” Huang Jiahui said anxiously.

The blood suddenly drained from everyone’s faces as they looked around them in fear.

No wonder it was so quiet. The plants were growing in odd shapes because this was where the atomic bombs had been detonated. It was possible that a large amount of radiation still remained in the area. Luo Yuan tapped the lizard’s head immediately and signaled for it to head back the way they had come from.

“We’ve been here for so long. Will anything happen to us?” Wang Shishi asked worriedly. The photos of deformed humans that she had seen in school had left a deep impression on her.

“No, our bodies are much stronger than before. Besides, we’ve only been here for about ten minutes. We’ll be fine,” Huang Jiahui said. It was more to comfort herself than anyone else. “See, aren’t some of the trees still alive?”

“But they look so strange. Have they mutated?” Wang Shishi asked uneasily.

Huang Jiahui was silent for a bit before saying, “No, they were already mutated plants.”

Suddenly, Wang Xiaguang’s body jerked and she almost fell off the lizard. Luo Yuan grabbed her quickly and asked, “Are you

alright?”

Wang Xiaguang shook her head, replying in a trembling voice, “I’m just a bit dizzy.”

“Me too. I feel like vomiting,” Wang Shishi said softly, her hand clutching onto Luo Yuan’s clothes.

Everyone looked troubled. They all felt the same way.

“Hold on a little longer, we’ll be out of here soon.” Luo Yuan looked at everyone, feeling his heart get heavy. It would seem that other than himself and Lin Xiaoji, everyone else had been affected by the radiation. Even Wang Shishi was experiencing the symptoms.

This time the radiation was different than last time. In that case, it had been several dozen kilometers away, the amount of it insignificantly low, so normal people were able to get over it easily. This time it was too close.

The vitality of mutated plants was exceptionally strong, so radiation could not do much harm to them. Such wide range of death could only mean that they had been extremely close to the center of the nuclear explosion.

“Brother Luo, can you help me break a branch here?” Cao Ling suddenly said, looking at the strange trees.

“What do you want the branch for?” Luo Yuan asked.

“These trees don’t have leaves. The radiation looks really serious, and there’s no other living organisms around. These kind of plants don’t use living things as a food source, so chances are they’ve absorbed the radiation,” Cao Ling explained, looking slightly excited.

“It could be possible. There’s this saying that says, ‘Wherever there are poisonous worms, there must also be a cure,’” Huo Dong cut in, feeling a sliver of hope.

Luo Yuan looked at the oddly-shaped trees and thought that Cao Ling’s hypothesis might be right. He quickly said, “You guys wait here. Let me go check it out.”

He jumped off the lizard’s back and briskly walked towards one of the trees.

Chapter 139: Sea Bridge

The tree was not big, about 7 – 8 meters tall and less than half a meter wide. It was bald and looked malnourished. What made Luo Yuan noticed it was that its bark was oddly smooth and flawless, akin to human skin.

While he thought it would not be dangerous, he was still cautious in approaching the tree, his dominance exuded from clutching his machete, stealthily.

Until Luo Yuan got closer, the strange tree did not seem to move.

“It seems like this tree was affected by the radiation... but it’s still a normal tree.”, thought Luo Yuan, as he relaxed. He chose a branch to hop on, and chopped it off effortlessly.

At that very moment, Luo Yuan seemed to feel that the tree quivered in pain, calmed itself down quickly.

Luo Yuan hopped off the tree for a closer look and observed it meticulously.

The tree was motionless, like a how a normal plant would be. He would have been baffled if the chopped branch was wriggling around like an injured snake now.

This was actually rather normal. It was natural of living creatures to avoid harm. Even though Luo Yuan laid low, the aura

he exuded was much like that of a dark blue level mutated beast. A Level Light Blue tree would never provoke such a human-form mutated beast unless it wanted to face its doom. If its senses were sensitive enough, it would probably notice a genuine dark blue level giant lizard nearby. That could be considered an overlord of most of the mutated beasts.

This was also the reason it had been quiet and peaceful along their way. It was impossible for their journey to be this serene, regardless of how scarce the living creatures were left, post-radiation.

“Didn’t expect plants to play dead too,” Luo Yuan thought, but let the tree go as he did not want to cause any more trouble.

As he picked up the branch, it seemed to have been provoked and wanted to coil itself around Luo Yuan’s hand. With a grunt, he shook it harshly, causing the branch to spasm. Luo Yuan unleashed Identification and was taken aback with his observation.

“Branch of Radiation Tree”

“Rarity: Light Blue”

“Weight: 3”

“Equipped Ability: Absorbs radiation from its surroundings.”

“Comment: Radiation Trees usually lives in areas of nuclear

radiation, causing the tree to mutate for survival. They use radiation as food and sometimes eats mutated creatures. Its attack power is extremely strong, but its juice is the best raw anti-radiation ingredient mostly used for medical purposes.”

Luo Yuan dare not delay any further, and returned as everyone had been exposed to the radiation.

“This branch isn’t poisonous, is it?”, said Wang Shishi, disgusted, looking at the twitching branch.

“Don’t worry, it’s not. Everyone will be okay after drinking the squeezed juice later,” Luo Yuan replied.

“It’s too scary, can’t believe that even plants can move,” said Cao Ling, afraid.

“Hehe, women should like this best, wouldn’t they?”, teased Huo Dong inappropriately, losing all sense of tactfulness.

The men laughed in tacit knowledge, even Luo Yuan too, had chuckled in unison.

Not only did Huang Jiahui and Cao Ling who had experienced such situation before, were flustered, even Wang Shishi who was just a young girl flushed. Huang Jiahui glared at him, “No jokes like this next time.”

The rest of the females too, glared at him.

Huo Dong shut his mouth in obedience and apologized profusely as he could not afford to offend the ladies.

Luo Yuan then had Wang Jiahui take out a few wooden bowls as they forcefully twisted the branch. Everyone drank a small bowl of the red juice that was squeezed out, Luo Yuan included, as he was afraid his body would succumb to radiation too.

The juice was not as bad as he thought. It was bittersweet, with a light herbal aroma, capable of lifting one's spirits after consumption.

The effect was immediate. Wang Xianguang was healing well, while the rest of them with fewer symptoms completely recovered.

To avoid any remaining radiation in their bodies, Luo Yuan hacked a few branches off and kept them in his rucksack for emergencies, leaving the place right after getting on top of the lizard.

Due to the wide area affected by the radiation, the group had to make dozens of unnecessary kilometers in their journey, but the gigantic size of the lizard enabled it to reach 4 – 5 meters with each stride. Its 15-point Dexterity allowed it to reach 20 – 30 meters per second even in the thickets of the forest. Even then, the speed was already slowed down as Luo Yuan was worried that everyone would fall off should it move too fast.

Thus, they had already arrived at the highway by 2pm despite

taking a longer route.

It was several dozen kilometers away from the Heaven Pillar's Tree; the surface of the road was still intact.

As they got onto the highway, they turned back to see a several hundred-meter tall volcano standing in the distance, with thick smoke billowing out. No buildings were saved from the destruction around the radius of over 10 kilometers; the area was blanketed by coagulating lava.

That included a small part of Hedong City.

Words would not do justice, in describing the force of mother nature.

Everyone was dumbfounded, unable to recover from the daze.

“Will it erupt again?” Huang Jiahui suddenly asked, looking at the dense smoke.

“It's an active volcano but it might take much longer before erupting again. But that's uncertain too. Maybe it'll erupt again next time,” Luo Yuan answered.

“Wouldn't Hedong City be very dangerous if the volcano were to erupt again? Apart from the survivors, there are still hundreds of thousands of people living in the underground base,” said Huang Jiahui, her face losing its color.

“Sister Huang, life and death have been destined. We can’t even protect ourselves, so why even care about others so much?” Cao Ling asked. She was triggered with the mere mention of the underground base. She had planned to go there but was taken away before she could even see the gate, thus having only ill-feelings about the place.

Not only Cao Ling, the rest of them felt indifferent too.

“My daughter might be inside.” said Huang Jiahui solemnly after a while, “I thought she would be very safe... looks like not even the underground base is free from harm.”

Her ex-husband was the leader of the armed forces; he would be in priority, regardless of defense power or job position. This was why she made her daughter follow her ex-husband, thinking it would be much safer for her.

Everyone was sombre.

Intense sadness flashed across Huo Dong’s face, as his 8-year-old son was separated from him during the chaos too. He did not have much hope, given that a little kid would hardly be able to survive the chaotic situation. But deep down, he still hoped that his son would’ve somehow stayed alive.

“Nobody knows when they would meet their doom in this apocalypse. Maybe today, maybe tomorrow... us included. So don’t get too caught up on this. At least they’re in a safer place now,

compared to us.” Luo Yuan hugged Huang Jiahui, and assured her gently, “Your daughter will too be fine, let’s go.”

Huang Jiahui nodded but turned her head back from time to time, her expression indecipherable.

The giant lizard moved much faster as it got onto the highway, unleashing the high dexterity attribute as its speed picked up.

The surrounding blurred out of their line of vision as the wind blew against them.

Everyone grabbed on tight to the carpet nervously. Wang Shishi clung onto Luo Yuan’s elbow, terrified of being flung away.

They had finally arrived at the sea bridge before the sky had darkened.

Luo Yuan stopped the lizard and frowned, looking into the distance, “Damn it, we still won’t be able to pass. Looks like we have to go around it again.”

The sea bridge that used to look like a long dragon was crooked and laden with cracks now. The coarse cables hung onto the structure, as some large pieces of cement were suspended. Even the abutment that served as the bridge’s pillar, laid horizontal in a mess.

Due to the low tide, there were lots of plane surfaces except for a

few lower spots that still contained sea water. Moss grew sparingly under the bridge, possibly forming a forest soon with time.

Luo Yuan's heart felt heavier when he saw a large footprint on the sea bed even from afar. This was obviously left by dangerous ocean creatures.

Fortunately, they had left with the low tide, as he could see none of them now.

"If we go the other way round, we can only use the provincial highway. That would be an additional several hundreds of kilometers, and we'd have to through a forest. We don't even know if there's still a route there." said Huang Jiahui pensively, "Can we go beneath it?"

"The sea bed is too soft... I'm worried if it could be a deep swamp instead. It'd be bad if we were to sink into it," said Luo Yuan thoughtfully. He was only afraid of running into swamps, as he would be helpless, should one of them had sunk.

"No need to think about it now. The sky is getting darker, we'll talk about it tomorrow," Luo Yuan continued, after looking at the overcast sky.

As the sea bridge was across the ocean, it was more dangerous than the land, so the defense was much tougher compared to the highway. Enormous fortifications were built on both sides of the sea bridge's entrance.

3 rusty tanks were parked at the gate and there were another 2 multi-barrel rocket launchers behind the gate. The pile of rocket launchers were 3 meters long each, and gave an impressive deterrence.

In addition to the multiple cannons, Luo Yuan guessed that it would be enough to defend even a beastly wave.

Luo Yuan made the lizard stop at the entrance and went into the fortification. The first floor was the control center; it was a mess inside with documents and cigarette ashes scattered around. The people seemed to have left in a hurry as he noticed a photo frame, which was such a personal item, was left behind.

Luo Yuan turned and went into another office. The stench of a rotting corpse greeted him as he pushed the door open.

A sea of black beetles escaped in a rush, frightened by Luo Yuan.

A skeleton wearing a major's uniform sat was seen sitting on the chair of the office. Its skull had fallen to the floor, a circular hole was on its temple and a pistol laid where the arm hung – a sign of suicide.

Did something strange happen here?

Chapter 140: Survivors

“There’s an arsenal in the basement.” Huo Dong and the others ran over to report, as Luo Yuan looked around, “But most of the items have been moved, 7 of the cannons placed at the embrasures were taken away too.”

Luo Yuan followed them into the basement, the spacious arsenal was completely emptied. Other than few dozens of large rocket missiles still neatly placed by the corner, not even a box of bullets was left.

“Who do you think moved these?” Luo Yuan asked.

“It shouldn’t be the soldiers here. If they wanted to move them, they would’ve driven the few tanks away too instead of leaving them there. The only possibility is that there could still be survivors nearby,” said Huo Dong said.

Everyone was delighted.

“There are still survivors?” said Luo Yuan, shocked.

It had been uninhabited this entire time, other than some plants and mutated beasts. Desolation and hopelessness were in their minds, as the place had given the illusion that all human traces had been wiped out. With that assumption, everyone seemed to breathe easily.

“Should be around here, I guess.” Huo Dong said, “It’s near the sea here so it’s all saline soil. Plants are lesser here than out there too. We should be safer here than anywhere else.”

“But they’re too inconsiderate; they didn’t leave anything at all! Even blankets and towels were all taken,” Wang Shishi pouted, muttering discontently.

Luo Yuan frowned a little. They had almost nothing now since all their belongings were gone. They had initially wanted to replenish the ones here but it seemed like nothing was left.

“Found any salt?” Luo Yuan asked.

Salt is not only a seasoning, but a necessary component to the human body as sodium and chloride helps to control fluid balance for the functioning of muscles and nerves.

They had not had any salt intake for the last 5 days. Although they did drink a few mouthfuls of mutated blood each day, the amount of sodium in the blood could never compare to the one in salt. Even Luo Yuan felt easily fatigued recently. If they could not find any salt any time soon, he probably would not be able to last any longer too.

“No, we searched everywhere.” Huang Jiahui shook her head, “If we’d known, we would’ve searched for them along the way.”

“We were rushing earlier. It’s just salt, nobody noticed. Who

would've known it would be so hard to find even a bag of it now. I'll go over to the opposite base, maybe there's some there," Luo Yuan said, sighing.

Less than a minutes later, he returned. It was just the same where he went, everything had been cleared.

Huang Jiahui sighed, "We've been out of it for so many days, one more day makes no difference. I guess the stations nearby would have been cleared too. Let's resume the search tomorrow."

"We can only do that now. Luckily it's all sea water here. We'll just boil them to get salt if everything else fails," Luo Yuan said, shaking his head.

The group finished having dinner before nightfall; no one had much appetite since there wasn't any salt. They chose an enclosed room after that, and slept off after dusting it and laying down the bed boards.

Even though the conditions were extremely bare, with not even blankets available, the square room seemed luxurious, compared to the damp and cold tree hole in the forest.

A peaceful night passed, as everyone finally got to have a good night's sleep.

The weather was still gloomy the next day. The aftermath of the volcano eruption would not seem to clear up anytime soon,

imminent of grey skies for a good, long while.

Luo Yuan had been sitting at the door since the break of dawn, wiping off imaginary dust from his machete with a cloth, while staring intently at it.

After such a long time of using the machete along with his willpower, his will had more or less left its mark on the blade, forming a faint, invisible connection between them. Holding the machete in his hand now almost felt like it was an extension of his own arm.

It sounded mysterious, but it was also a common case. You form an inexplicable bond with the things you use often. A lot of experienced technicians would have their own set of tools that they do not simply exchange for another, unless they were forced to. If they ever had to change it, the new set would feel foreign in their hands. One's will could easily mark itself on tools that has been used for a long time. While the situation with his machete was much weaker in comparison, unnoticeable even, the connection did indeed exist.

Luo Yuan kept his machete back to its scabbard after a while, thinking to depart now as everyone else should have been done packing.

Just as he wanted to move, he heard voices of people talking in the distance. He looked towards its direction after getting over the initial shock.

On the sea bed under the sea bridge, 7 men were walking carefully and talking very softly. Their conversation was rather inaudible, as he was too far away.

They had various cold weapons and explosives with them. They looked like they were hunting, as the 5 men in front continuously poked the mud with their spears, while another 2 rifle-armed men were on the lookout. Luo Yuan could feel the tension, even from a few kilometers away.

Their luck was not bad. They witnessed an aggressive struggle in the mud after several minutes, as a man who managed to stab the beast's body was flung away by its tail. He stood up quickly with his mouth bleeding, but retreated soon after.

Gunshots fired quickly as the 2 men pulled the triggers aiming at the mud. The beast was shot as the mud was slowly stained red.

They either did not have much bullets or were trying to save them, as the gunshots stopped after a few seconds.

The rest of the men went in as a substitute, brutally stabbing their spears into the struggling ball of mud, while some people were flung away by the force.

These men were ruthless, as their attacks never stopped. The struggle in the mud gradually got weaker and weaker.

A few minutes later, the mud was completely devoid of

movement. A eel-like mutated beast about 4 meters long surfaced after the men dug around the mud.

One of the men stabbed his spear forcefully through the beast's body and all of them carried the body back without wasting any time. They disappearing into the forest in a flash.

Huang Jiahui who walked over, saw Luo Yuan glancing downwards, and asked curiously, "What's up?"

"I saw people down there just now, not a small number of them too," Luo Yuan said.

Huang Jiahui exclaimed in disbelief, "There are people down there? The tide will be coming soon, how can they still be there?"

"This place is the sea bed and the tide ebbed not too long ago. Of course it's safer staying here rather than out there," Luo Yuan said nonchalantly, seeing that the place had less plants compared to other places, "You guys wait up, let me go see what's up. If it's within walking distance, we can pass through this seabed. If not, we could at least go home with some salt."

"Do you need another few people to go with you? If they've taken all the weapons here, they should have plenty there. I don't believe in people turning heartless in an apocalypse, but we should still take precaution," said Huang Jiahui worriedly. She was less naïve now that she had been through so much.

The destruction of societal structure has made everyone unscrupulous. The pressure to survive a further-decaying humanity, was intense.

“It’s only gonna be troublesome with too many people. Don’t worry, I’ll return in a flash,” Luo Yuan said. With his capabilities now, he would not get hurt unless it was a heavy rain of bullets. Even then, he would only be lightly wounded with the defense of his clothes. He could still escape. If he had too many people with him, he might cause animosity instead.

Huang Jiahui knew how Luo Yuan was, so she could only ask him to be careful.

Luo Yuan nodded and jumped off from the bridge’s rails some ten meters from the ground. With his will, he slowly floated down like a feather, with his feet already stepping on solid ground the very next moment.

Huang Jiahui only came back to her senses from watching him, when Luo Yuan turned to wave at her.

The route was not an easy one. It was filled with soft mud and pits. Luo Yuan’s shoes and pants were stained with mud within a blink of an eye. He shook his heavy shoes, flinging the mud away.

After a while of having his legs in the mud, Luo Yuan finally arrived where the group of men hunted. There were a long trail of footprints extending to the inner part of the forest, an clear indication of their whereabouts.

The plants were sparse and short, their average height barely 3 meters. They resembled more of a thicket instead of a forest, by the current standards.

Luo Yuan followed the footprints and arrived at a small village, after about half an hour.

All the trees within several hundred meters' radius were chopped down, several dozens of various colored tents were placed in the middle. What shocked Luo Yuan was that there were a lot of people here, who seemed merry. They all wore torn clothes but their faces were painted with all sorts of pigments, concealing what they really looked like.

These pigments must have certain effects. Otherwise, no one would paint such pungent substances on themselves. Luo Yuan could even smell the scent, far from where he stood.

Luo Yuan was further taken aback, when he sensed a strong aura.

He continued walking and soon discovered a large creature by the corner of the village, "A dark blue level mutated beast! There's a dark blue level mutated beast here!"

It was a fiery red lion-like beast but larger and more valiant than a lion. Even while it was lying down, it was about 3 meters tall. Its fiery fur danced in the breeze like a ball of flames.

It was extremely sharp; its ears were twitching and standing up as its eyes opened to look towards Luo Yuan, as he approached it.

Luo Yuan's hand went to the handle of his machete gently, as he moved back slowly.

He did not want to start any battles. This beast was obviously someone's pet. It would be disaster to the whole village, if it ever got killed or hurt.

The creature did not attack right away. Confusion seemed to flash across its eyes as it stared intently at Luo Yuan, without further reaction.

Suddenly, its tail wagged joyfully, as the hostility in its eyes vanished.

Under Luo Yuan's cautious gaze, the creature moved towards a tent on the left and stopped at the entrance. Its head lowering into the tent as it howled a little. Not long after, a woman with the same painted face followed the beast out.

Chapter 141: Meeting Zhao Yali Again

The woman wore several layers of torn clothes, also colored with the pigments, covering herself up securely. She held a pistol and murmured as she walked, “Lao Huang, it’s so dangerous outside. Why did you ask me to come out? If there’s nothing important, I’ll beat you up.”

Luo Yuan felt a sense of *déjà vu*, as he witnessed the scene.

The woman was just a little taller than the beast’s calf. It could have stomped on her by accident, yet its tongue hung and its tail wagged as it lowered itself to pander to her, under her nagging.

The beast stopped and howled towards where Luo Yuan was.

The woman’s gaze followed and landed on Luo Yuan. She was stunned, not even noticing that her pistol had fallen on the ground as her lips quivered, “Xiao Yuan.”

Nobody called him Xiao Yuan anymore now, not even the oldest Huo Dong in his group. The familiar voice put Luo Yuan in a state of trance; unsure as he uttered, “Sister Yali?”

The woman was none other than Zhao Yali. She was beyond shaken, “You’re still alive?”

She had imagined their reunion countless of times, but her imagination had gradually shattered with the increasing cruelty of

the apocalypse. She even felt that he had died alongside the others, who were killed by the mutated beasts.

She passed Donghu City with the refugees before, but the once-vibrant city had turned into a slum, even Hedong City had fallen. She no longer carried any hope; her memory of Luo Yuan fading with time. Who would have known that she would actually meet him on such an ordinary afternoon.

Looking at Luo Yuan who was just as striking as he was pre-apocalypse, and the clean clothes on him, she was at a loss of words, her hands smoothing her dirty tangled hair, before tugging at her stained wrinkled clothes to straighten them.

Luo Yuan went a few steps forward and was equally shaken, “It’s really you. What about uncle and aunty?”

“The fifth day after you left, dad and Lao Huang went to the farmland to find food again but didn’t return after a long time. Mum was worried and went to find them. By the afternoon, Lao Huang dragged two bodies back, both poisoned to death by worms,” Zhao Yali said with a sob.

“I’m sorry,” Luo Yuan sighed.

“It’s nothing, it’s been a long time now,” Zhao Yali wiped her eyes, smudging the pigments on her face.

It pained Luo Yuan, as he extended his hands in attempt to grab

hers, but she pulled out gently, turning her head, “Don’t be like this.”

Luo Yuan had thought that she was just a little not used to it, given that they had not met for so long, and attempted again but was cut off by a deep voice.

“Yali, who’s this?”

A man holding a spear ran over to Zhao Yali’s side, without a care for Lao Huang. Lao Huang’s tail wagged again, obviously familiar with the man.

Listening to how the man had addressed Zhao Yali so intimately, Luo Yuan had a bad feeling about this.

Zhao Yali was caught off guard, “He’s my friend in Donghu City last time, we just met again.”

Her gaze then avoided Luo Yuan, “Xiao Yuan, this is my boyfriend, Zhu Hao.”

The man seemed to have missed the scene earlier as he smiled, “It’s such coincidence that you’ve found this place. We’re pretty hidden. Since you’re Yali’s friend, you’re my friend too. If you have nowhere to go, stay here. It’s pretty barren and you have to struggle in the mud to get here, but nothing is more important than safety at times like this.”

Luo Yuan was irked, forcing a smile with a few deep breaths, “Thanks, but I won’t stay here for long. I came over just to see if this was a passable route. It was only by chance that I met Sister Yali.”

He should have known earlier that with Zhao Yali’s good looks, even if she was ugly, as long as Lao Huang was with her, it would be impossible to not have any suitors. In this extreme era of hunger for power and safety, no man without the least ambition would miss seizing the opportunity of acquiring a dark blue level creature.

Both of them had a fling in the past. Even if there were feelings involved, they had faded with time too.

Zhu Hao had a good built. It could be seen that he was not bad looking even with a full face of pigments. Besides, his voice was in a rich baritone, and he spoke in a gentleman-like manner. His status would definitely not be low in this survivor’s camp. Woman like Zhao Yali who was gentle and a little unsure of herself, would never be able to resist him as long as he put away his pride or status to court her.

“That’s good too. We can’t stay here for long anyway. The tide is coming soon, we’ll have to find a new place by then. But isn’t it too rushed to leave so fast? Stay for lunch, you can catch up with Yali since you both haven’t met in such a long time,” Zhu Hao smiled.

His smile seemed sincere to Luo Yuan, with not a hint of discontent traceable. Luo Yuan was sure that he himself would not be able to act the same. This man was not an easy person. Yet, only

a man like that could survive in this harsh world now.

Thinking about it, he did not want to stay any longer and said shaking his head, “It’s alright, my friends are still waiting for me. I’ll leave after asking about the route here.”

Zhu Hao was relieved but Zhao Yali cut him just as he was about to speak, “You should leave after a meal together. Aren’t you happy to see me again? If you’re worried about your friends, ask them all over.”

Luo Yuan could not reject her invitation, finally nodding after looking at her imploring gaze, “Okay, I’ll ask them over.”

Looking at Luo Yuan’s retreating back, Zhu Hao turned and spoke to Zhao Yali, “We just caught a large eel. I’ll ask them to prepare it. Would you like to come help?”

Zhao Yali did not seem like herself, apologizing after some time, “I’m a little tired, let me rest for a bit. Call me when Xiao Yuan’s here.”

Then she left for her tent.

Zhu Hao’s expression darkened immediately. Anyone who was not blind could see the odd tension between them. They would probably have each other in a passionate embrace had he not rushed over in time.

He had been abstaining from sex to court Zhao Yali, rejecting a few women who had offered themselves to him and showing great concern for her along their way of fleeing, even being subservient to please her. After all the effort he had put in, he did not expect this obstacle out of nowhere when he was so close to succeeding.

He stared at Luo Yuan as he walked away for some time, before finally turning to leave as well.

It was already two hours later when Luo Yuan and company arrived.

To prevent unnecessary panic, Luo Yuan did not bring the lizard along. Even their luggage was left where they were.

The campsite was filled with garbage; an inexplicable stench permeating the air. A skinny woman in torn clothes pulled down her pants and started to pee in front of everyone.

A few men eyed her fair exposed buttocks and dragged her into a nearby tent before she could even finish peeing. Along the way, her bed-games and the men's teasing chides was clearly audible to everyone's ears.

Huang Jiahui who had not been too happy, became even more upset watching the scene.

A lot of people were digging the mud by the village's side in search of food.

A bony man fell in spasm in the midst of digging, people around him moving away with a flash of terror on their otherwise emotionless face, but that was all. Nobody screamed nor ran away, everyone resumed digging around the mud, after looking at him and avoiding the spot.

Apart from being shaken with what they saw, the group was grateful to have followed Luo Yuan. Had it not been for him, they would end up being one of these people.

There were more than a hundred people in the camp, but the difference was stark even when both sides were survivors. Perhaps it was the shortage of food, causing most of the survivors here to be pale faced and dull eyed, with not an ounce of energy left in them.

There was still a handful of healthy-looking ones but these were mostly comprising strong men and beautiful women.

Luo Yuan knew that a status quo would always exist regardless of era. It used to be intelligence, now it was strength. Only the stronger ones would live better in apocalypse and acquire more resources, be it food or women.

A muscular youth came to get them soon enough. He looked at Luo Yuan challengingly but his eyes shifted its focus upon seeing the women.

They were too clean compared to the women in the camp. Their

clean clothes, immaculate appearance and decent features stood out like a sore thumb here, especially Wang Shishi – her delicate face was akin to that of a painting; her soft skin radiating like alabaster.

Wang Shishi retorted with offense, “What are you looking at?”

The youth smiled thoughtfully, “Everyone, follow me.”

The group followed him to the front of the biggest tent, and he stopped, “Weapons are not allowed in here. You have to pass them all to me, I hope you would kindly co-operate.”

“So many of you are scared of the few of us?” said Lin Xiaoji, vexed.

The youth smirked, “This is where we hold meetings. No one is allowed to bring any weapons in here. A rule is a rule; no one is exempted.”

“Since when did your rules ever apply to us?,” questioned Cao Ling.

Luo Yuan hesitated and then said, “Forget it. We’re guests, it’s not nice to bring weapons. Pass them to him.”

He then passed over his machete.

The youth's face changed just as he got hold of it. The heavy weight of the machete made him hold it with both his hands quickly.

Astonishment ran through his face as he stared at Luo Yuan, who had been effortlessly carrying the machete single-handedly all along.

Everyone followed suit, since Luo Yuan had already passed up his own weapon, and the group then walked into the tent.

Plank covered the base of the tent, and a thick layer of carpet covered the wood but it was still a little damp.

A round table was placed in the middle with 7 people already around it, Zhu Hao sitting at the leading position but Zhao Yali was nowhere in sight.

Chapter 142: Bottom Line

The table was empty without so much as a morsel of food. Anyone could feel the hostility within the gaze on Luo Yuan and friends, when they entered. Luo Yuan then had the realization that this would probably be a [Hongmen banquet](#).

A feast or meeting set up as a trap for the invited party

“Have a seat, everyone. Dishes will be served soon. There are no outsiders here, Yali’s not here too. There’s something I’d like to clarify first or I’m afraid that this meal will be hard to swallow,” Zhu Hao said, with a lit cigarette. He did not have to disguise his dislike since Zhao Yali was not here.

“So troublesome... to even have a meal. What did you want to say?” Luo Yuan smirked as he moved towards the table. With a stretch of his hand, a hole was dug in the solid wood table as he slowly placed the wood pieces on the table.

The wordless deterrence achieved its effect, but Zhu Hao suddenly let out a loud laugh, “Gutsy. But you have to understand that this is my territory. I know you’re not weak either since you were able to make your way here and attend the banquet without fear... but just to remind you, I already have a few machine guns aiming towards this tent ever since you got in. If you dare try anything funny, I’m afraid you won’t be able to leave,” Zhu Hao said lightly as he stepped on the cigarette he puffed and lit another one with a slight shudder.

Everyone looked at Luo Yuan in panic, but was assured when his expression remained stoic.

Luo Yuan tapped the table lightly and said coldly after some time, “Tell me about it.”

“Alright,” Zhu Hao subconsciously let out a breath he did not know he was holding. He did not know why he would always felt a little out of breath whenever he faced Luo Yuan, as if he was facing a mutated beast instead of a human. He had been trying to dominate the situation since they entered, but it was obvious that he did not succeed.

“Let’s each mind our own business, I don’t want to complicate matters too. Zhao Yali is now my girlfriend, so please leave immediately after lunch. Ultimately, she’s only a beautiful woman. If you need, I can give you a few more who are prettier. But to this survivor’s camp, she’s akin to a protector god. So don’t you worry, I’ll take good care of her.”

Zhu Hao was undoubtedly a smart man, he knew when and what to give and take. He knew what he needed and worked to acquire it. Zhao Yali was not only a woman, but a force of deterrence to him.

Luo Yuan’s arrival had caused him a sense of crisis. Anyone who was not blind could see that Zhao Yali still had feelings for the man. If it were a normal woman, he could just send her as a sign of friendship, but it was different with Zhao Yali. Having her would mean having a fourth level beast.

This beast was too important to him and to this campsite. The

most crucial reason this site could remain so safe was because of this beast's existence. He had to keep it here regardless of circumstances; and to keep it here means keeping Zhao Yali here. He had especially crafted 2 solutions before this banquet – they could either do it the hard way or the easy way, but he must send him away as soon as possible.

Luo Yuan was irked. He was not someone who cannot be reasoned with, and Zhao Yali was already someone else's girlfriend. By right, he should have given up, but for some reason, he was extremely unsettled, as though a ball of fire burned silently in him.

He kept quiet for a while then said raising his head slowly, “And if I don't agree?”

Surviving was already difficult with the unpredictable danger in the era of apocalypse when you could die anytime, so he saw no reason to live so cautiously.

Zhu Hao's subordinates' hands immediately went to their pistols, the air seemed frozen in place with the impending battle.

“This is not giving me face, she's my woman now,” Zhu Hao sneered.

His words stung Luo Yuan deeply, his face darkening, as his eyes bored holes into Zhu Hao. A threatening aura exuded from him as the air became restless, even the wood pieces on the table seemed to begin floating.

The youth guarding by the entrance suddenly realized that the black machete beside him shook intensely, as if wanting to come out from its scabbard. He pressed on it with shock yet the blade did not stop quaking.

There was a pin-drop silence in the tent

Cold sweat trickled down the foreheads of Zhu Hao and his gang, their hands on the pistols stoned like statues. Instinct told them that chaos would entail with any rash action.

Zhu Hao finally knew why he was so breathless facing Luo Yuan. He was too powerful, so much so that with just his gaze, nobody dared to move. He could possibly kill everyone here in a flash too, if he wished to.

“Luo Yuan, enough,” Huang Jiahui suddenly voiced out, she did not look happy. Luo Yuan had crossed the line this time. She could close an eye when Luo Yuan killed people, but he should only kill those who deserved it, not simply murdering as he wished, especially not for someone else’s girlfriend.

The threatening aura slowly dissipated. Luo Yuan stood up solemnly after a while, “Let’s go.”

His voice was laced with endless exhaustion, everyone could feel his depressing mood.

Zhu Hao wanted to end things with some pleasantries, but realized that his words seemed to be stuck in his throat.

Just as Luo Yuan was ready to leave, a loud growl came from the camp, deafening everyone.

“It’s a giant dog,” one of Zhu Hao’s subordinates shouted.

Before the first growl ended, another growl came from a distance; with both beasts engaging in a competition.

“Roar!”

“Oww!”

Luo Yuan’s expression changed, he briskly walked out of the tent and had already picked up his machete before the youth guarding the entrance could react. Zhu Hao and gang followed him out after some hesitation.

The trees in front fell, as a huge beast revealed itself.

Everyone around fled screaming, knocking over some of the tents.

“Giant lizard’s here,” Wang Shishi said happily.

The lizard came following Luo Yuan's scent since he did not return after so long.

Lao Huang guarded at the entrance of the campsite, its red fur blowing luxuriously with the wind, as a transparent layer of red flame hovered above its fur. It growled angrily at the lizard, but Zhao Yali was nowhere to be seen, possibly already in hiding.

Luo Yuan noticed the cannons set around nearby were already shifting their aims towards the lizard. He quickly grabbed Zhu Hao by his side and growled, "Order them to stop at once."

Everything had happened too fast. Zhu Hao who was still confused finally understood now that these people too, had a fourth level beast. He nodded his head, afraid that Luo Yuan would kill him, and shouted loudly, "Everyone hold your horses, everyone stop!"

It was impossible for anyone to have heard his order in this nerve-wracking situation, so cannons fired almost immediately, but thankfully, none of the people operating them were professionals as the first round of fire missed.

Yet it still frightened the lizard, its scales spiking and movement picked up to speed towards Lao Huang.

Even Luo Yuan could not catch the lizard's sudden movement.

Its 15-point Dexterity (Luo Yuan's was 14 points) blurred its

movement from everyone's eyes. Within a blink, it had knocked into Lao Huang sending it flying. Lao Huang rolled with the momentum, with its high heat fur burning the mud.

Before it could stop rolling, the lizard charged again, its claws dug into Lao Huang's body as it opened its mouth, aiming at the dog's throat.

Although both beasts were dark blue level mutated beasts, the giant lizard was still much stronger than Lao Huang due to its AP. Both of them were on different levels – the lizard's speed alone could only dominate Lao Huang.

“Everyone stop,” Luo Yuan roared breaking out in cold sweat.

Hearing his familiar voice, the giant lizard halted its movement in reflex. Its head cocked to one side as it looked around, claw still stepping on Lao Huang. Lao Huang was wailing, its body frozen in place.

Someone nearby prepared to fire the cannon again. With a brisk movement, Luo Yuan had already chopped the cannon about a dozen meters away into halves, frightening the person into a stun.

Zhu Hao noticed Luo Yuan's incredible speed and quickly ordered everyone to stop.

Finally, everyone stopped in their tracks, but alas, the campsite was already a mess.

Lao Huang's wails finally made Zhao Yali charge towards where they were from her tent.

"Make your beast let go of Lao Huang now, you bastard. You're hurting it," Zhao Yali grabbed Luo Yuan's clothes, angrily shouting like she has gone mad.

Luo Yuan did not disclose any emotion and shouted, "Giant lizard, come back!"

The lizard loosened its grip and turned to come over, causing the ground to tremble with every step. Those standing near Luo Yuan scattered away once again.

Zhao Yali let go of Luo Yuan in an instance, and rushed over to Lao Huang.

Even though Lao Huang had already mutated, its canine personality remained. With a pitiful wail, it got up and hid behind Zhao Yali to lick its wounds.

The stark contrast of its size and action was hilarious but no one was able to laugh at the moment.

Huang Jiahui had been exceptionally calm. She realized that Zhu Hao who had gone to inform Zhao Yali of the situation was now blended into the crowd and was loudly instructing his subordinates.

She looked at the silent Luo Yuan and the puzzled crowd, and seemed to realize something and raised her pistol to aim it towards Zhu Hao who was further away.

Chapter 143: Abducting

“Zhidong, get someone into my tent. There’s still a cannon there. Zhao Wu, you and the others blend into the crowd the with guns but don’t shoot unless absolutely needed,” Zhu Hao instructed quickly.

He was a dominant person; never the type to leave his fate in the hands of others and always had a backup plan in mind. But no matter how strong a person was, he would have his own set of weaknesses, like everyone else around him.

He asked while carefully analysing the situation with Luo Yuan, “How many grenades do we have left?”

“I didn’t...didn’t count, but there’s still about 15 boxes left,” said one of his men, after much thought.

As they had cleared all military weapons from the fortifications around them, shortage of firearms and weapons were no longer an issue.

“How many times have I told you to record all the weapons with individual serial numbers? Never mind, we’ll talk about this next time...”

He looked towards Luo Yuan again, now stricken with panic. A platinum pistol was aimed at him, not moving the trigger. His back was drenched in sweat; his arm pulling one of his subordinates closer instinctively.

It was useless.

The gun had fired, a dark blue level bullet catapulted through the air and shot through the body without any obstacles, embedding a hole right through his forehead.

Zhu Hao's eyes widened with disbelief, succumbing to the ground, shuddering.

Up to the point of his death, he could not understand why the person who killed him was not Luo Yuan, not three of his useless men, but the woman who stopped Luo Yuan from killing loudly earlier.

Luo Yuan turned over, looking at Huang Jiahui in shock, feeling touched, "You..."

"No more time to lose, bring the woman with you, and run," Huang Jiahui said without emotions, pulling the trigger continuously at the few men around Zhu Hao.

Zhu Hao's death caused another bout of chaos in the campsite, which was just regaining its peace. A few men with a much quicker reflex action had already brandished their pistols, some running towards the cannons.

Luo Yuan was alarmed but he immediately reacted. He made the lizard crouch a little lower and shouted, "Everyone get onto the

lizard, we're leaving this place.”

The group snapped out of their bewilderment, and did as they were told.

Immediately after, Luo Yuan was already charging towards someone who was just about to fire his pistol, and slaughtered him into half. Without delaying, he then advanced towards another gunman on the left. The man did not even have a chance to react as he lost all consciousness with a slash of Luo Yan's blade.

With a turn of events, Luo Yuan no longer restrained himself from slaughtering another.

Letting loose of his 14-point Dexterity, not a single soul with their guns out survived in those few short seconds. Ultimately, everyone was scared and naturally kept their guns in their pockets.

Luo Yuan turned to see that everyone was already on the lizard, except Huang Jiahui, who was still shooting away.

“Leave quickly, I'll catch up,” Luo Yuan shouted.

Huang Jiahui did not decline as she knew Luo Yuan's capabilities very well. She retreated step by step, before turning to run towards the lizard. In a flash, Luo Yuan hacked an accelerating bullet aimed towards Huang Jiahui into half, with the help of Sensory Perception.

Before he least expected it, Luo Yuan picked up a stone and threw it towards the gunman but his poor excuse of a long-distance aim had the stone shooting past the person's ear instead, but that too, was enough to scare him half to death.

In Zhu Hao's tent, a machine gun was propped up, the long bullets forming a small golden hill as the muzzle aimed towards Luo Yuan from the hole of the tent. Both machine gunners witnessed the situation outside with bated breaths and cold sweat dripping off their foreheads, while watching the increasing number of deaths.

“When do we fire?”

“I don't know...We might die if we fire... and if we don't, then it's guaranteed we won't die. Which one do you choose?”

“I want to stay alive,” the person stuttered, after some hesitation.

“Me too.”

Zhao Yali was already scared, dumbfounded by the gory scene in the campsite, only reacting with a scream when she was thrown onto the back of the lizard.

Feeling its master's fear, Lao Huang was enraged, wanting to charge over but once it saw Zhao Yali on the lizard's back, it stopped in its tracks. The earlier battle had left an impact on him.

Luo Yuan retreated with caution and jumped onto the lizard promptly. The lizard seemed to have noticed Luo Yuan's impatience with his forceful tap, as it growled lowly in obedience before running away.

Lao Huang paced the ground restlessly while seeing its owner getting further and further away from him but decided to follow suit, without much thought. It roared at the lizard along the way, its voice echoing long and deep, reverberating through the air.

A soft, gentle breeze blew by.

Zhao Yali sat on the back of the lizard with a straight face.

Wang Shishi pouted, keeping the ball in her court, and ignoring Luo Yuan. Huang Jiahui lowered her head in silence; she wasn't in the best of moods either. Wang Xianguang who was beside her looked equally upset.

The tension kept everyone silent but Huo Dong and the others were filled with curiosity to gossip, despite being well-aware that it was not the appropriate time.

The giant lizard sloshed its way through the mud, calf-deep. Luo Yuan did not realize that it had chosen to go through the seabed, but since the mud was not too deep, he decided against asking the lizard to detour.

Luo Yuan looked at the grey clouds above and sighed softly. He

had killed a lot of people since the dawn of apocalypse, but not one had caused him to be this restless like today's, not even when he had murdered for the first time.

He would always be able to find an excuse for himself each time he killed someone, but this time round, he was at a loss.

He had no reason and no right to blame Huang Jiahui too. It would be a lie to say that he was not the least bit delighted when Huang Jiahui murdered Zhu Hao earlier. No man would not want to eliminate their competition in the name of love; a universal truth for as long as one was a man.

Huang Jiahui did not state anything explicitly, but he knew she did it for him. She was part of the police force, thus her sense of justice would always be much stronger than Luo Yuan's insincere kindness. Although she had stopped him from killing another, but she would kill for him the very next moment.

"You're so stupid," Luo Yuan could not help but to utter, looking at Huang Jiahui.

Huang Jiahui kept quiet for a bit before she turned and said, "I don't want to see you dead because of a woman."

With her character, the light ridicule in front of everyone was enough to decipher her extreme discontent.

Zhao Yali remained emotionless at the side, as if it she wasn't the

subject of their conversation.

Luo Yuan laughed dryly and diverted the topic to loosen the mood, “It’s already noon now and we haven’t eaten. They wouldn’t be chasing after us now. Why don’t we continue our journey after eating?”

“Let’s eat first then,” Huang Jiahui knew she couldn’t pressure him too much especially when Zhao Yali was around. So, she relented. Besides, everyone had not had a bite since morning.

The lizard halted as the group slid off its back. Zhao Yali lost her bearings as she got down, but pushed Luo Yuan’s hands away when he tried to help. She deliberately slowed her pace and ran towards Lao Huang once Luo Yuan’s attention was off her.

As he saw Zhao Yali run away just as he was putting down the luggage, he pursued her, rather unhappily.

Zhao Yali could not help but beckoned her pet as she saw him chasing her, “Lao Huang, pick me up quickly.”

The creature stood up right away when it heard her voice, encouraging the woman to run without looking back.

Too bad Luo Yuan had already caught up with her just as she spoke.

Lao Huang hesitated and paced around for a while, and decided

not to go any closer, as he was still afraid of the lizard.

“Let go of me, you monster,” Zhao Yali punched Luo Yuan violently.

“Where are you going?”

Her struggles were like mere scratches to Luo Yuan, as he could effortlessly drag her back.

“I’m going back to the campsite, I won’t leave with you, even if I die.” Zhao Yali struggled again, but could not free herself, “You’re hurting me, let go, let go of me!”

“If you dare go back there, I’ll kill everyone else there,” Luo Yuan threatened her as he let her go.

“You, you murderer. You’re crazy.” Zhao Yali shook in anger, feeling threatened. Consumed by guilt, she sobbed, “Why are you doing this to me? I’ve been living just fine. Just as I met you, you killed my boyfriend and taken so many other lives. How could you do that?”

Luo Yuan did not clarify that he was not the one responsible behind Zhu Hao’s assassination, but the sobbing Zhao Yali brought him to say gently, “Because you’re mine.”

She looked at Luo Yuan in despise, “Then why didn’t you come for me much earlier? You’re abducting me only now, when I’ve

finally forgotten about you? What do you think I am?”

Luo Yuan had nothing to retort. He laughed dryly, “Stop it. We’ll talk about this later. Everyone’s waiting. Let’s have something to eat first.”

After that, he tried pulling Zhao Yali closer, but was cast away by her again.

Zhao Yali wiped her tears away, smudging the pigments on her face and headed back reluctantly, not running away anymore.

Zhao Yali and Zhu Hao just started courting, so they had not developed deep feelings for each other yet. What she was furious about was how Luo Yuan could just bring himself to kill him out of a sudden. After all, Zhu Hao did treat her well and took good care of her. However choosy she was, she would still harbour feelings for him, even after a long time.

Chapter 144: Ocean-Like River

When both of them returned, Huo Dong had already lit the fire.

When a large piece of fish skin was spread open, pieces of grilled fish jerky were placed on it.

Huang Jiahui had no expression, as if not overhearing their argument, she calmly poured everyone wooden cups of tree juice and offered it to Zhao Yali, "Try this."

Zhao Yali was gentle and courteous, she would throw tantrums at people she was familiar with, but would never show any unpleasant emotions in front of others. She quickly thanked her.

Holding the cup, she took a sip before a bigger gulp, in silence.

Wang Shishi was not as calm. Her Brother Luo was too much of a womanizer. His women came and left one after another, threatening her presence.

She could not stop glaring at Zhao Yali, most of the pigments on the woman's face had already been washed off by her tears, revealing her actual face. The more she looked at her, the more familiar she felt Zhao Yali was. Not caring about her hostility anymore, she asked in shock, "Didn't you stay right across my house before?"

Zhao Yali was stunned. She did not expect to have someone who

would recognize here other than Luo Yuan. She looked at Wang Shishi carefully, but the girl had already changed so much, so it didn't ring a bell.

"I lived right across the street from where you lived, we used to meet often." Wang Shishi explained, as she saw her confusion.

Zhao Yali gave some thought and was surprised when fragments of her memory came back, "You've grown so much now, and you're now with Luo Yuan."

"My parents are not here anymore, so I've been following Brother Luo since."

Zhao Yali sighed as she thought of her family, drinking the tree juice silently, holding the wooden cup and worrying about the future.

Seeing that everyone started to converse with one another and that the atmosphere was no longer as tensed, Cao Ling could not help but to voice her curiosity, "What's that on your face? I see everyone in the camp with their faces painted with the same pigment."

Zhao Yali flushed a little, "It's juice from a type of tree, to keep the insects at bay, but the effect isn't really good."

Other than Luo Yuan and Wang Shishi, everyone's eyes lit up. Although the juice's smell was horrible and looked unsightly

painted on one's face, mere aesthetics were nothing compared to staying alive. Cao Ling quickly asked, "What type of plant is it?"

Zhao Yali felt a little awkward, "I'm not too sure. These were... found by Zhu Hao and the others."

She had always been timid. Ever since she got to the campsite, she had never been out to the dangerous forest, so there was no way she could ever know which plant the juice came from.

Disappointment flashed across everyone's face. Out of so many mutated plants, it would be akin to finding needle in a haystack to locate the correct plant.

Luo Yuan chose not to participate in the women's conversation, as he brought a wooden bucket further away. The place was mostly low lands, so the seawater that collected in the pits after the tide ebbed contained a lot of salt, especially after being exposed to the rays of the sun.

The water pits had whirlpools in them, making the water murky when Luo Yuan approached them. Regardless, he picked one that was slightly cleaner and returned with a bucketful of water.

Huang Jiahui and Cao Ling layered a few pieces of cloth together to filter the dirty water seeing that the salt was ready to be boiled, but those cloth were not meant for filtering. The water was still rather muddy, but they could only make do with it.

Propping the stone pot up properly, the water boiled quickly with the strong fire, leaving nothing but salt after it had evaporated.

These salt were not white like the ones in their supplies before the apocalypse, but rather, a grayish off-white coloured one.

“There are too much impurities in the salt, I think it’s gonna be very bitter,” Huo Dong said.

“It’ll still be better than having none, I could eat 50 grams of it,” said Lin Xiaoji, as he licked his cracked lips. Anything he ate had always been tasteless without salt consumption for such a long time, hence he couldn’t care less if the salt was bitter.

All the water evaporated quickly as the salt crystals formed at the bottom of the pot, but it looked nothing like the salt that was sold in the stores.

Everyone quickly had a tasted, the salt was bitter and full of sand; not even dogs would eat it back in the pre-apocalypse days. But now, everyone seemed to enjoy it. Those who had never experienced this dire situation would never know how drastic it was not to consume salt for a long time. Some of them had even grabbed a handful of it and chewed it like candy, swallowing everything, including the sand.

Excluding Zhao Yali, everyone had a lot of the salt since as they were deprived from it for days. In the end, they emptied the tree juice as well, from being too thirsty.

After the meal, they wrapped the remaining salt up and departed once more after packing.

Large carcasses were seen on the seabed along the way. These ocean creatures that were yet to mutate enough to survive on land, had all died when the tide was low. Luo Yuan saw one of the carcasses that was at least 30 meters long and 8 – 9 meters tall. The skeleton laid on the seabed like a small mound.

He went over to check it out and realized that this was not a dark blue level creature, yet its size was much larger than land creatures, like the giant lizard. He was afraid that with its size alone, even normal light green level land creatures would be powerless against it.

Luo Yuan thought it only comprised a shallow seabed, but as they approached the middle of the sea bridge, the shallow beds were covered with seawater, with various sizes of lakes everywhere.

Initially, they could still avoid it but the lakes got bigger and bigger. When they could finally see the other side, their path was hindered by a long lake a few kilometers wide.

Luo Yuan looked around but even with his eyesight, he could not spot the end of the lake; it seemed to have turned into the size of an ocean.

“This river is too wide, should we turn back?” asked Huang Jiahui, in low spirits.

“We’ve walked this far, it’ll be such a waste to turn back now.” said an exasperated Huo Dong, with a long face, “It’s already 3pm. The sky will turn dark soon. It’s all mud here, so it’s gonna be hard to dig any holes. Sleeping out here is too dangerous too.”

“Yeah, the water should not be too deep. I guess it would go as far as 3 – 4 meters deep, but it shouldn’t be a problem for the giant lizard,” Lin Xiaoji said too.

It would be too disheartening to turn back now, when they had walked so far and the destination was already in sight.

One factor that deterred him was about sleeping in open-air, and the other was the dangers of the sea. Luo Yuan was a little hesitant. Hoping that the water would probably not be home to any strong mutated creatures, he decided, “Let’s go into the water first. If it’s too deep, then we’ll turn back.”

Nobody objected, since Luo Yuan had already decided so.

The giant lizard went into the water carefully, growling from time to time in attempt to scare away the approaching mutated fishes.

The water got deeper and deeper after some ten minutes, its level reaching the lizard’s thighs now.

The water sometimes had ripples on its surface, as if being pierced by a high-speed arrow, at times there were splashes up to a

few meters high, and other times, blood seeped out from the bottom of the sea. Threats were hiding behind every corner, with the splashes splattering on everyone a few times now.

Naturally, the group paled in fear. Zhao Yali had already forgotten her feud with Luo Yuan, as she clung timidly onto his arm.

Chapter 145: Flying

“Ahhhhhhh!” Huang Jiahui let out a shrill scream.

Her right hand was slapping her left brutally, something was trying to probe into the back of her hand.

Luo Yuan quickly grabbed her hand and saw a small black worm about a chopstick's girth probing itself into her skin. It would not let go no matter how hard Huang Jiahui hit it.

This creature obviously came from the splash of seawater just now. His face darkened immensely, not expecting the sea to have parasites like this lurking, as he squeezed hard onto the worm in mere seconds.

The parasite was smooth and slick, surprisingly forceful when it twisted and turned, despite its size. Luo Yuan would probably have lost his grip if he was caught off-guard. He then ripped the parasite out with brute force.

The worm was flung off Huang Jiahui's hand and blood gushed out from the wound like a burst pipe. Luo Yuan realized that the parasite had already penetrated about 10 centimeters deep into the back of her hand.

The whole worm was about a foot long, wriggling intensively on Luo Yuan's hand as its head wrapped itself around the hand as though preparing to probe into his skin.

Luo Yuan squashed the worm brutally into half and threw it back into the sea.

“There are creatures in the sea everyone, please be careful.” said Luo Yuan seriously, “Try not to open your mouths and don’t get distracted by anything; protect yourselves well.”

This kind of parasite was the hardest to handle. There would still be some time to react if it went into the skin but if it made its way into the mouth, nose or ears, it would be difficult to save the victim. Thankfully Luo Yuan noticed that there was not much of these creatures in the sea, as they were probably lurking in the depths of the water.

Luo Yuan stared long and hard at the sea, there was only one of those worms but he spotted plenty of sharp-teethed mutated fishes. They were not afraid of the lizard’s dark blue level aura at all, as they were surrounding them and lingering.

Everyone nodded their heads obediently.

“Wang Shishi, use your telekinesis, try not to let the water splash in,” Luo Yuan continued.

“Got it,” Wang Shishi did not hesitate to form a sphere of protection with her telekinesis.

Luo Yuan then relaxed a little and asked Huang Jiahui who was

already bandaging her wound, “You alright?”

“It didn’t get into my arteries, thankfully. I’m okay, don’t you worry,” Huang Jiahui said. She was not fragile, and this wound was certainly not a big deal to her.

“Protect yourself carefully,” said a concerned Luo Yuan.

Huang Jiahui nodded, feeling the warmth from his concern.

Luo Yuan noticed that Wang Shishi had been casting telekinesis all along and shook his head. She was powerful and usually makes a profound impact, making her the most important person after Luo Yuan in this group.

Yet, she severely lacked training and did not know how to conserve her energy in battles. At her current level, she would not be able to keep up for long at the rate she is using telekinesis.

“Very good work, but don’t keep casting it. Wait until the water starts splashing before using your telekinetic energy, do I make myself clear?” Luo Yuan first praised her effort then asked.

Wang Shishi hesitated before nodding, “I’ll try.”

The telekinetic sphere disappeared as the girl gripped onto her shirt, fully concentrating and observing her surroundings. Immediately after, a whirlpool appeared on the left of the sea and a big fish about several meters long, leapt out from the water, with

splattering droplets of water everywhere.

Wang Shishi hurriedly casted telekinesis, but was still half a beat slower, and the droplets had already drenched everyone.

Luo Yuan immediately brandished his machete, slashing a few small silver fishes in the air and then with a turn, flung the bodies away with its blade. These silver fishes were piranha-like, with sharp, criss-crossed teeth– posing great danger even when they were sliced in half.

His movements were quick, with more than a dozen strikes within just a second. Before everyone could recover from shock, he already spoke, “Move on.”

Wang Shishi’s fists clenched tightly, she nodded and focused even more on her surroundings.

She initially casted her telekinesis but her reaction was still delayed. As time passed, she could already handle the situation without Luo Yuan’s help.

With safer circumstances, Zhao Yali became more relaxed as well. She looked at her ex-neighbor astonished; this timid girl in front of her was actually a powerful, evolved person now.

They did not have a single evolved person in their campsite. She heard everything about them from Zhu Hao, so the topic had always been mysterious to her. She would not have expected to

ever meet one here.

What surprised her even more was Luo Yuan himself

He had become much stronger than before now that she had not seen him in a long time. She could still see how Luo Yuan wielded his machete during battles last time but now, she could not catch even a tiny glimpse of anything, as if he had not moved at all.

She then turned to look at Lao Huang. The dog had followed them but was not looking at the sea, anxious, not daring to go in.

Zhao Yali felt a pinch in her heart, she knew Lao Huang exuded flames, so it must be afraid of water. Would it not follow her at all?

Just as she thought about it, Lao Huang seemed to have made up its mind as it pushed its limbs forward and charged into the sea.

She grabbed onto Luo Yuan's, overwhelmed by a turmoil of feelings.

Luo Yuan thought she was still afraid and comforted her, "Don't worry, we'll pass this river soon."

When Zhao Yali understood the situation, she glared daggers at him, giving him the silent treatment.

If it were not for him, Lao Huang would not have to take such a

risk to cross the waters. She wouldn't even have to face such fears as well, and would still be staying happily in the campsite.

Luo Yuan was a little confused by her reaction, but suddenly, his expression changed.

Even though Zhao Yali was sulking, she had been paying close attention to Luo Yuan. Seeing his sudden pale face and his body quivering, she could care less about her fit and asked, "What's up with you?"

Zhao Yali's voice made everyone shifted their gaze to Luo Yuan.

Huang Jiahui saw that he seemed much more lethargic than before and was shaken, "Luo Yuan, are the old injuries affecting you?"

Just before this, Luo Yuan could feel a mysterious force being sucked away from him rapidly. He could not feel the earth's energy anymore so his body was experiencing some sort of exhaustion from the rapid depletion of energy.

This was the first time it happened. Usually, he could feel endless energy from the earth no matter if he was at the top of a tall building or jumping in the air.

He noticed that the water level had risen to the lizard's stomach now; the depth more than 3 meters. Maybe the seawater had blocked the earth so his evolved ability had completely

disappeared.

He opened the attributes panel and indeed, Earth Stomp was greyed and his energy level went back to its original value. He took a deep breath to gradually adapt to this 'weak' state.

Luo Yuan shook his head and said in a low voice, "Don't worry, I'm fine."

He did not bother explaining. His evolved ability was his biggest secret after the system, especially one that possessed such weakness. It was better to have less people in the know. Huang Jiahui and Wang Shishi would never betray him but it was hard to tell for the rest.

Seeing Luo Yuan's colors returned, Huang Jiahui was a bit more relieved and turned to blame herself, "It's all our fault. Let's rest for a few days when we reach Jiaping City."

Just as Luo Yuan wanted to speak, one of the lizard's feet got caught in a muddy pit and it tripped towards the left.

"Be careful!" Luo Yuan shouted.

But it was too late. Everyone fell into the water with a scream. Luo Yuan managed to pull Zhao Yali and Huang Jiahui who were by his side, but three of them including Wang Shishi, had already fallen into the water, save for Huo Dong, Lin Xiaoji and Wang Xianguang.

It was a mess, everyone was screaming and frantic splashes ensued.

Luo Yuan jumped into the water and threw Chen Xianfeng, who was the nearest, onto the lizard's back, the instant he grabbed him.

Cao Ling was terrified. She could not swim and could only struggle helplessly in the water before she started to drown.

“Help me! I can't make it!” Cao Ling struggled.

“Quick, grab my hand!” Zhao Yali held onto Huang Jiahui's waist tightly as the latter shouted extending half of her body out towards the sea.

Just as Cao Ling was about to react, her body sank, her screams were silenced by the water rushing into her mouth, making her feel faintish.

Luo Yuan looked at Wang Shishi, who was using telekinesis to hinder the water from drowning her, and swam towards Cao Ling, assuming the girl could still manage on her own.

He did not have experience saving people from water, so he was dragged down just as he approached Cao Ling, who clung on him instinctively.

If he were to be a normal person, both of them would be dead by now instead of him saving her; his strength was extreme and reaction was quick. He dived into the water and pried her limbs away from himself, before tossing her onto the lizard.

He did not dare to delay any further, and turned to save Wang Shishi, but was stunned by what he saw.

Wang Shishi was screaming in fear of losing control of her telekinesis now. The water was pushed away, forming a 2-meter-diameter dry area as a miracle happened.

Her body slowly rose into the air and out of the water.

The sea below quaked as the water was compressed into a concave some few meters wide by the telekinetic energy, forming a magical view as her body blurred and her screams sounding more and more distant.

She left the water and rose higher.

Chapter 146: Ingenious Use

Wang Shishi rose higher and higher, finally stopping after she was 5 – 6 meters away from the sea.

Harsh winds blew around her as the surface of the sea tremored intensely, scaring the mutated creatures away.

Everyone looked on in shock, even Luo Yuan had momentarily forgotten to keep swimming.

Even though Luo Yuan had long predicted that one could hover about in the air when the telekinesis was strong enough to sustain one's body weight, he was still astonished and envious when he saw it happening right before his very own eyes.

What surprised him even more was the speed of her improvement. Wang Shishi was about an average weight of 40 – 45 kilograms. A few months ago, she could still barely move a 10 kilogram object but she could now hold her own body up.

The speed of improvement of his ability was even faster than his own.

Of course, this strength was unleashed under desperation, but with practice, she could achieve this again easily, in the future.

At that moment, Wang Shishi trembled midair, losing traction of her telekinesis, and began to fall.

Her eyes were shut tight, face pasty white, already unconscious.

Luo Yuan had been noticing her condition so before she could fall into the water, he was already charging towards her like a bolting arrow, to her rescue.

He dared not stay long in the water, and swam towards the lizard immediately after getting Wang Shishi.

Huang Jiahui had long been waiting anxiously, quickly pulling Luo Yuan up when he got close.

“How is she?” Luo Yuan placed Wang Shishi down gently and asked about the now-unconscious Cao Ling.

Cao Ling laid motionless on the lizard’s back, everyone discreetly maintaining an odd distance with her, as if holding back from something.

“She opened her eyes once and said that her stomach hurts.” Huang Jiahui said worriedly, “... and fainted again after a while.”

“Move over, let me take a look.” He quickly moved closer to her.

His face was grim; already conjuring bad premonitions. There were no more clean water sources ever since the apocalypse. Even crystal clear spring water would have countless of microscopic

worms or parasite eggs. Drinking them directly was no better than committing suicide.

He quickly pulled up Cao Ling's shirt, as something seemed to be wriggling under her soft skin.

Luo Yuan tried sensing the situation in her body but it was as if some mysterious force was repelling his senses.

Cao Ling's face became paler as her body went into spasm. He dared not hesitate, pressing on her stomach in efforts to expel water, but the worst was yet to come.

Just as he exerted some force, her body curled up in pain, throwing up blood as her face flushed.

Countless of small wiry worms were wriggling in that pool of blood she threw up, bring a bout of disgust to everyone.

Luo Yuan looked at the crimson pool and knew that she was not going to make it.

He gripped his machete but slowly loosened his grasp. If he had dissected her stomach, she would probably perish faster in her current condition.

Beads of cold sweat dotted his forehead.

“How can we remedy this?” Huang Jiahui asked anxiously, “Or use your machete to absorb life –”

Luo Yuan shook his head grimly, “This might allow her to stay alive longer but the ending is still the same, it will only prolong her suffering. Let me think, you take a look at Wang Shishi to see if she drank any water.”

Huang Jiahui nodded and turned to check on Wang Shishi, suppressing her sadness.

Wang Xianguang was already taking care of Wang Shishi and she forced a smile, “I’ve checked once. Luckily she’s alright, her lips are not wet from the seawater. She may have fainted, but but not from this.”

Huang Jiahui was a little more relieved when she saw that Chen Xianfeng was alright too, at least two of them were fine.

Luo Yuan looked at Cao Ling who was going through periodic spasms, slapping the lizard’s back in frustration.

The giant lizard roared feeling wronged, its body trembled once.

As he raised his hand, he suddenly had an epiphany.

Will.

If there were to be something that had the power to kill the parasites in one's body, yet not cause harm to a person, it could only be Will. The magical thing about Will was that it triggers according to one's intention. When attacking an enemy, Will will increase the fatality of the attack, but when under attack, Will will increase one's defense.

It could be light and it could also be heat. Will could exist in any form – this was mankind's most magical energy.

He did not know if it would be effective, but there was only one way to find out.

Closing and opening his eyes, a faint glow visible even in broad daylight appeared in his hands. They pressed down on Cao Ling's stomach slowly.

Just as the contact was made, an invisible wave went through her body as it froze, as they watched her frowns softening.

Luo Yuan came out of using Will and touched her stomach. It was quiet without the earlier wriggling, as the parasites in the latest blood she puked were all dead now.

He checked her body again; her heartbeats were irregular, breathing haphazardly as blood kept gushing out from her mouth. There must have been severe internal bleeding.

She was in a critical state, as the parasites must have pierced her

organs.

Huo Dong shook his head passively. While he did not know what the glow in Luo Yuan's hands were, he understood that her injury was fatal, even if it were to be pre-apocalypse.

“Luo Yuan...” Huang Jiahui could not help but beckoned him.

Luo Yuan seemed to not have heard her, as his hands glowed again when he raised them. The glow this time was a little different; it was dense like clouds and morphing into different shapes in his palms.

He then pressed his glowing hands on her stomach again.

Luo Yuan realized that the feeling was completely different compared to the previous one. It had been to attack and destruct earlier, so he did not feel the existence of life, but this time, he felt the resistance.

The human body's defense was like a balloon. It would be effortless to burst it with a poke of a needle poke but difficult for water to even seep through it.

However, Luo Yuan's Will was far stronger than Cao Ling's, so her body could not put up a fight but the depletion of will was shockingly fast; its effect slow, on the contrary.

A quarter of his Will was consumed within just a second, when

he could usually last 7 – 8 seconds with the same amount of Will in battles. Of course, the amount of time was calculated by adding both attacks and defense using Will. If he had only needed to maintain his Will's concentration, he could easily last more than an hour.

In fact, as long as he did not use it, the depletion of Will was extremely little, almost to none.

Two seconds later, Luo Yuan stopped. It was not a safe time to deplete all his Will yet, in case of unexpected battles.

He looked at Cao Ling, her internal bleeding stopped, but only temporarily. She would still be in critical danger if she did not get help soon.

Luo Yuan stood up, dusting his hands. The giant lizard had already crossed the middle of the ocean-like river, with the water becoming shallower, as the bank was nearer than ever.

They would arrive in another ten minutes, and only then, would he think of another solution.

Everyone witnessed Cao Ling's recovery. Other than Huang Jiahui who had seen Luo Yuan using his Will, everyone else was swept by a mix of shock, confusion, and respect towards how he healed her.

“Boss, was that an internal force just now?” Huo Dong thought

about it for a long time before asking. He could not hold it in any longer as he had been meaning to ask this for a long time now.

Of course, apart from asking, he was hopeful too.

It would be the legendary internal force. If it could be passed around, he too, could protect himself well in this era of apocalypse.

Luo Yuan looked at everyone's eager gaze. Other than Huang Jiahui who was hiding her smile, even Zhao Yali came closer – the temptation of internal force.

He chuckled, shook his head and explained, "It's not some internal force, at least not by what I've seen. Nothing too magical. It's just the effects of Will. You will all understand when you're able to focus all your Will on something too."

Luo Yuan stopped explaining, seeing as nobody believed him. It was hard to explain anyway. People who had seen that glow from his Will would assume it was an internal force.

Luo Yuan sometimes suspected that internal force was actually just another name for the moment when people focused their Will hard, after repeated self-meditation.

He checked on Wang Shishi again, and found out that she had only fainted from over-exertion of telekinesis, so he did not wake her up.

Luo Yuan then kept an eye on the surroundings along the way. Finally, the giant lizard safely crossed the river without running into any other dangers.

They could finally relax; frowns turning into smiles as they were now less than 6 kilometers away from passing the sea bridge.

Adhering to Luo Yuan's urge, the lizard picked up its pace and successfully arrived the fortification on the other side before nightfall.

Chapter 147: DNA Damage

The fortification was exactly the same as those they had seen previously.

However, Luo Yuan signaled everyone to stop once they entered. Though in reality, they would not dare enter without Luo Yuan instructing them to do so.

Cobwebs were everywhere inside, especially in the nooks and crannies. There were even several dozens of pupa-shaped objects wrapped entirely in spider webs, some of them taking the shape of obvious human forms.

Luo Yuan tried stepping on the cobweb on the ground, realizing that they were extremely sticky. An average person would never be able to get out of it despite being just his legs stuck. He figured he would not be able to escape if his body happened to be stuck on the web too.

Entering hastily might cost him his life so he quickly adjourned to the foyer. The giant lizard was then summoned.

The lizard was much smarter after its evolution; one of its skills included 'Observation', that reflected a higher level intelligence. With periodical training, it could now understand most of two-worded commands.

Like 'Spit fire'.

The lizard shook its head a little and opened its mouth, spitting an impactful stream of fire against the foyer.

“Boom!”

It sounded like the fortification it was hit by a bomb, as it quaked a little. The fire even reached as far as over 2 meters out of the embrasure.

The giant lizard was not actually a fire element mutated beast like Lao Huang. In comparison, it could not spit fire as well as the latter. What it managed to spit was the flammable gas from its body, so when a large amount of such gas was released into a comparatively sealed space, the effect was much more devastating than it would be in the wild – something Luo Yuan did not expect.

The flame then ignited the explosives stored upstairs and detonated a second explosion. Luckily there were not many explosives, so the explosion was not as destructive. Should rocket missiles be among the explosives, the fortification would probably be crumbled to dust by now.

Even so, it had already frightened Luo Yuan.

“Waaaaaaaah!” Countless of shrill cries like ones from babies’ was heard, as a few mutated spiders covered in flames escaped through the door, meeting their deaths when the giant lizard stomped on them. The one it missed was sliced into two by Luo Yuan as well.

A minute later, the noise came to a halt. A pit about 2 meters deep appeared in the foyer, still smoking from heat.

The initial white cobwebs were all burnt, piles of mutated beasts' and humans' skeleton were scattered around.

The place was burnt black; a few work tables and the door was still burning. The smell of burnt protein came from the inside. About a dozen spiders that did not escape laid on the floor burnt; their bodies almost cooked but their strong vitality kept them struggling from perishing straight away.

Luo Yuan wanted to end them all but had a change of thought.

Cao Ling was still in a critical state. These spiders could be a great source of life energy and would save him some effort.

Not only the first floor, but the whole fortification was completely burnt. Luo Yuan checked the whole building to find that the lizard had outdone itself with an impressive burn, blazing all the resources. But at least the things inside the basement was safe, as there was a metal door.

Luo Yuan chopped the door to the basement open, to be greeted by a fully-stocked arsenal.

Boxes after boxes of cannon shells lay stacked in the arsenal. Just from standing outside, Luo Yuan could already see about a

hundred boxes of them. He estimated that there would be more than 300 boxes if he could count what was inside too. There were also plenty of rifle bullets – about a dozen boxes of them, another several dozen boxes of various grenades, and several hundred of rocket missiles. On the other side of the arsenal were 7 cannons, 5 heavy sniper rifles and a dozen other rifles. The amount of weapons was sufficient for them to hold out through a small-scale war.

The others had already arrived carrying Cao Ling and Wang Shishi, and were dumbfounded when they saw the arsenal.

Ordinary people would have never had the chance to admire such weapons in a well-stocked arsenal. Although they had been to a similar arsenal, all the weapons there had already been moved away, save the rocket missiles and unlike this one that was filled to the brim with weapons and explosives.

“Fuck, how many things have those people at the campsite taken?” cursed Lin Xiaoji.

Huo Dong could no longer keep himself together. He went to the rack and picked up the heavy sniper rifle then played with another rifle while saying excitedly, “Not much, I reckon. This place seems to have just been restocked, otherwise, the arsenal wouldn’t be this full. I’ve no idea what caused everyone to retreat.”

The rest of the men went over to play with the firearms as well, seeing that Huo Dong was already there. Their faces wore the same eerie expression. The need for weapons had already hit an unhealthy level for people in this era. The ability to end anyone’s

life with a gun, was a great temptation.

“Luo Yuan, it’ll be too late if we drag on.” Huang Jiahui reminded, looking at Cao Ling who was getting paler on the floor.

She already seemed deathlike after so much delays and would probably die soon if no one came to her aid.

“Stop playing, we’ll have time for that later.” Luo Yuan quickly said, “Everyone, leave now. Pick a room and clean it up. I’ll treat Cao Ling at once.”

Explosives were everywhere. A small spark could ignite a massive explosion; it was far too dangerous to linger around much longer.

Luo Yuan carried Cao Ling from the basement to a room on the second floor. Putting her down gently, he carried the biggest spider from the first floor back to the room, after breaking off all its limbs.

Everyone took a few steps back as the mutated spider looked terrifying, a black colored human face grew on its back, as if it was carved there. The features on its face were distinct and life-like, even the sharp teeth in its mouth could be seen clearly. The human face had its eyes shut and seemed to be in agony.

They thought it was a camouflage as it was not a rare occurrence by nature, but when Luo Yuan stabbed his machete into the spider’s body, the face opened its mouth and revealed criss-crossed

teeth, with a shrill cry like that of a baby's, resounding in the room.

Bloodshot eyes opened following the cry, the gaze filled with vengeance and agony. Everyone had goosebumps, feeling like all hell has frozen over.

Luo Yuan grunted loudly, a hint of Will lacing his voice. The group shuddered and came back to their senses, horrified when they realized what happened.

Luo Yuan witnessed the same thing in the foyer earlier. This spider was the largest among the others. While its body only about a meter, it was a Blue level mutated beast.

Its powers were special too, conjuring illusions like the Ghost Locust previously. Too bad it met a ruthless giant lizard and died without putting up a fight, due to the lizard's flame.

There were no mission indication though. Blue level mutated beasts could not make the system react anymore now. With his speedy increase in capabilities, leveling up would be much harder in the future.

A noticeable heat could be felt from the machete's handle as the blade stabbed into the spider's body. The energy was far stronger than the Light Blue level tree before this; the effect more prominent as well. Luo Yuan too, felt like his spirits were lifted, with all exhaustion devoid from his body.

He dared not stall and thrust the handle into Cao Ling's hand.

Initially, her body did not react at all. A few minutes later, her ghastly pale face slowly regained some life and turned rosy pink.

Her body then started to seem flushed; her breath quickened, and her wet hair was steaming hot.

The energy from a Blue level mutated beast's life was too overpowering for a normal person. Although the spider was close to the brink of death, it was still too much for Cao Ling.

Huang Jiahui touched her head but retracted her hand quickly. Cao Ling's forehead was burning at shocking 40 – 50 degrees Celsius. She asked worriedly, "Will she be okay like that?"

Luo Yuan shook his head. He did not know if problems would rear its ugly head if this went on. Theoretically, she was absorbing some life energy, so she should be alright. To be safe, he stopped the energy supply.

Cao Ling's temperature gradually returned to normal as her breath stabilized after the energy supply was cut off. Other than still looking a little pasty, she seemed much better than before.

Looking at the spider now, it was completely dead after it had its life sucked out. What made Luo Yuan notice the spider was the wound which he recognized was from his machete.

A copious amount of reddish yellow pus appeared around the wound, the crust near the wound seemed to have eroded as well, losing its initial shine.

Luo Yuan was curious. He knocked the crust with the back of his machete, and the supposedly hard crust was now so delicate, a forming a hole with his slightly forceful knock.

He continued knocking, widening the hole to reveal rotten flesh inside. He stirred the insides with a wooden stick, and realized that all the flesh had lost its firmness, as it turned into pus-mixed blood easily, with only just a few stirs.

He suddenly thought of a term, “DNA damage”.

It was Luo Yuan’s first time. The huge tree before this could replenish its own energy with its roots, so its life was not completely sucked away even though it had already been a few days. Only its leaves wilted when they left, and there was no sign of DNA damage.

Chapter 148: Sound Of Water

Luo Yuan secretly assessed a completely corroded external bone.

“Unknown cement material;”

“Rarity: Grey ”

“Weight: 1.5kg”

“Remarks: This is a very rare mineral; important construction material;”

This extremely horrifying evaluation made Luo Yuan gasp. Not only has its external bone dropped from a blue level to a grey level, its original organic state has now become inorganic.

Luo Yuan never thought that this life absorbing ability could be so domineering. For him, being able to absorb life was just an ability that was quite convenient but for a mutated beast, it acts as an extreme attack.

But alas, this kind of attack was not very helpful for him as his style of combat was to fight fast and end it fast, killing everything in mere seconds. The speed of the ability was not as fast as he would like. Most of the time, the mutated beast had already been defeated, but he had yet to absorb much of its energy yet.

The sky turned dark very soon so they had their dinner early. The sky started turning dark before five. Cao Lin woke up in the midst of it. Although she was still weak, but she slowly stood up and walked.

A little excited, she thanked Luo Yuan profusely. If Luo Yuan had not stopped her, she would've already kneeled down in gratitude. She managed to escape death this time around. Having been given the chance to live after escaping from the brink of death, it was all thanks to Luo Yuan.

This heart-warming scene, touched everyone's heart.

Before heading off to bed, Luo Yuan let Cao Lin absorb life energy once again. Her condition progressively improved and before long, she could start eating again.

The day had fully turned into dusk by now.

Zhao Yali tossed and turned, unable to fall asleep. As the door was already burnt, it was left ajar. With every tiny squeak of a sound coming from outside, she was scared stiff. Paranoid, she kept feeling that there was a pair of eyes staring at her menacingly, in the dark.

She had the urge to pee in her pants due to her nervousness, which she could not hold in any longer. Both her legs were fidgeting non-stop.

She had no idea where Lao Huang had gone as well. When they sleep, Lao Huang is usually at her doorstep, so she did not have to worry about anything. But this time, Lao Huang was clearly not anywhere near her.

She got up and looked at Luo Yuan who lay close to her in the dark. He was clutching his knife and was sleeping soundly, with audible snores throughout the night.

“You are really a pig. I can’t wait for you to die in your sleep.” she thought with hatred.

She braced herself, stood up and glanced at the door of the black hole. It felt to her as if something terrifying or a hideous mutated creature would jump out through the door any second. She was scared stiff; her face turned pale white.

“It’s all dark. I shouldn’t worry that others would see me like this. I shouldn’t be embarrassed.” said Zhao Yali as she grinded her teeth. Lacking guts, she dared not go outside. She looked at the corner of the room and sneakily walked over. Her dire urge to pee at this point of time made her lose control of herself. Just when she was about to pull down her pants, she suddenly heard a voice and was shocked, almost peeing her pants in the process.

“It’s really late. What are you doing over there?” Luo Yuan said softly. Having experienced dangerous trials and tribulations over a long period of time, he had no choice but to be a light sleeper; the slightest motion could wake him up immediately.

When she heard Luo Yuan's voice, Zhao Yali was relieved but her face was a bashful bright red. She coyly said: "Why do you care about what I'm doing?"

In the dark, Luo Yuan could see both of her legs were all knotted up, and suddenly, he understood. He felt slightly awkward but said: "Let's go outside... there will be an odor here. Next time, just wake me up if there is anything you need."

Zhao Yali softened. Her face blushed all of a sudden. If there was a hole in the ground right now she would have buried herself there and then. Reluctantly, she said: "Who says I want to ... here?"

Luo Yuan did not bother about her being so firm in her speech. He got up and walked out. Zhao Yali hesitated for a while, bit her teeth and followed suit.

The two, one walking in front with the other at the back, reached the first floor.

"Back off a little bit, will you?" Zhao Yali snapped coldly.

Luo Yuan yawned, and took a few steps back.

Zhao Yali held her pants and turned to peek at him once again. It was totally dark – not the slightest glimmer of light in sight. She had no idea where Luo Yuan backed away to. She panicked, trembled, and said: "Luo Yuan..... come closer a little, would

you?”

Luo Yuan had to move forward a few steps again. Zhao Yali could see Luo Yuan's figure vaguely standing a short distance away from her and calmed down. It was so dark, he wouldn't even be able to see anything. With that thought in mind, she could no longer hold her pee in anymore. Just as she pulled her pants down, a sound akin to a torrential flow was heard, as she had obviously held in her pee for quite some time now.

She let out a gasp, but without her knowledge, she was completely exposed under Luo Yuan's fiery sight.

Luo Yuan's capabilities had exceeded the limitations of a normal human being. He already had improved vision for a long time now. For normal humans, it would be pitch black but he could see everything clearly.

Her snow-white buttocks were round and firm, making Luo Yuan's heart beat a little faster.

After they went out, he never quite found the chance to get intimate with Huang Jiahui. He had held back his desires for quite a few days now. Even more so with his vigorous and energetic spirit, he had a much higher drive than an ordinary human. When he saw her in such a compromising position, he couldn't help but to start breathing heavily.

Zhao Yali had just finished easing herself. Before she could pull up her pants, Luo Yuan embraced her from the back. She was

shocked and almost screamed. But as soon as she realized it was Luo Yuan, she struggled and said angrily: “What are you doing? Let go of me or I’ll start shouting!”

She lowered down her voice as she instructed Luo Yuan, as it was obvious that she did not want anyone else to be eavesdropping.

“Go ahead and shout if you want. Everyone knows you are my woman.” Luo Yuan turned her body towards himself, and said it like a rascal.

“You jerk! It was a long time ago.” Zhao Yali turned her face away and warned him sternly, “Don’t you dare touch me, get out of my way.”

She would not forgive Luo Yuan so easily. Having a record of murdering so many people, no guilt was felt. He did not even apologize to her properly. Besides, he had always said that he had feelings for her, but he still had unresolved and casual relationships with several other women, especially with that Huang Jiahui, it was very suspicious.

But just as she warned him, Luo Yuan’s lips violently pressed against hers.

Zhao Yali bit her teeth tightly, not allowing his tongue into her mouth. Her hand moved downwards, and forcefully pinched Luo Yuan’s waist, trying to get him to back off. But alas, his flesh was firm, just like rubber. After she held on to her pinch for a while, she had no strength to keep pinching him anymore.

She almost went ballistic. She moved on to using her hands to desperately push against Luo Yuan's chest. Unfortunately, her strength had no effect on Luo Yuan.

When she was struggling, her pants had already fell to the floor, revealing her snowy white legs. Luo Yuan lifted her light body up and positioned her on the wall of the hall.

“You jerk, let go of me or I'll start biting!” Zhao Yali finally got to open her mouth, as she grinded her teeth and threatened him. Her plump breasts bounced up and down, as she panted heavily.

Luo Yuan totally ignored her powerless threats.

At that point, her hair was already in a mess, her charming face blushed a shade of red. Hot passion ignited in Luo Yuan's heart as he looked at her. Next, he slipped his hand into her shirt, moving towards her bosoms. The two pinkish bunnies moved about in his hands. A strong sense of dizziness consumed her body. She even forgot to struggle anymore.

Luo Yuan took off his pants. Finally, he asked: “Did you have sex with him?”

“He is my boyfriend, we have already... numerous times already.” Zhao Yali regained her senses.

Luo Yuan coldly snorted and penetrated her.

Zhao Yali panted loudly, and quickly covered her mouth. One hand powerlessly pinching everywhere in an attempt to strike back but she only got weaker and weaker.

When Luo Yuan first penetrated her, he was still gentle. But very soon, it escalated into faster, deeper thrusts. Zhao Yali covered her mouth as tight as she could but ended up moaning shamefully.

Luo Yuan asked again: “Did you, or did you not?”

“I did...” said a reluctant Zhao Yali.

How dare she acted so stubborn with him? Luo Yuan’s force became faster and faster, thrusting in and out like a high-speed engine. Zhao Yali stared at him with her fatigued eyes, her hands tightly closing her mouth, yet her seductive moans couldn’t stop. After a few seconds, she let out a scream and blanked out as her body twitched violently... she then fell down to the ground.

“This is all your fault. We were definitely heard by everyone. How do I face the others next time?” said a grumpy Zhao Yali, as she came back to her senses.

“It’s okay if they heard it, as everyone knows about our relationship anyway.”

Luo Yuan felt slightly uncomfortable. They were so loud, everyone upstairs were definitely able to hear it, for sure. But he

couldn't care much, as he had to settle things with Zhao Yali first.

“You're such a jerk. You forced yourself on me! If there was cop nearby, I would definitely report you.” said Zhao Yali, brimming with hatred. Just when she thought of the awkward stares from the rest, she felt even more bitter.

She touched her private parts and said “It is all sticky down there. How am I supposed to clean off anything without so much as a light?”

“Just use your panty and wipe it up. We'll boil some water tomorrow morning.” Luo Yuan chuckled and said.

She had no choice but to do so. Zhao Yali pulled up her undergarments and wiped up as much as she can. Both of them felt slightly guilty, and sneaked back to the room on the second floor.

The room was silent. They did not know if they were only pretending to sleep, or if they were genuinely fast asleep. Luo Yuan knew that Huang Jiahui was definitely not asleep. Her eyelashes were twitching, her breaths were chaotic... clearly, her heart was not at ease.

Luo Yuan's heart was slightly guilty. Looking at Zhao Yali laying down, he wanted to walk towards Huang Jiahui.

Suddenly, he heard a splash of water coming from out outside. The sound gradually became louder and louder, and it seemed

something was getting closer to them. The giant lizard that was outside seemed to have sensed some unease, as it kept growling.

Luo Yuan's heart stopped in its tracks.

Huang Jiahui heard the giant lizard's warning, and felt uncomfortable. She could not bother to be jealous anymore and sat up right away: "Is something out there?"

"Stay here first, all of you. I'll go and check it out. But don't fall asleep yet, if you don't want to be caught off guard and be rushing like a maniac." Luo Yuan thought and said, "The sound is still far away. It won't be affecting us anytime soon."

"Be careful." Huang Jiahui said.

Luo Yuan nodded. He took his Zhanmadao and walked out of the room rapidly.

The giant lizard stomped on the spot. Its nose was fuming with green smoke, seemingly irritated. Luo Yuan looked over the Bay Bridge. Though it was not the season for floods yet, it was time for the appearance of the mutated beast. He thought to himself, and decided to leave the giant lizard on the ground. He adjourned to check it out for himself.

The giant lizard was aggressive and brutal. What was capable of causing it such annoyance could only be a more superior creature. But this time around, he only went to check out what was

happening, not for combat as it would not only be of no help but may even lead to unnecessary risks.

Luo Yuan asked the giant lizard to stay silent to avoid attracting any giant beasts. After that, he took a step forward and dashed towards the Bay Bridge.

Chapter 149: Spawn Of The Giant Archelon

The night view was silent like still water.

On the edge of the Bay Bridge, the sea breeze was blowing hard, and swept in a humid smell.

Sounds of water could be heard from afar. It used to be much more serene, but now, it has become turbulent. It was akin to a massive tide lapping towards their direction. Then, it started to drizzle.

Luo Yuan touched his face; it felt a bit moist.

After a few minutes, he could vaguely see a gigantic shadow. It dashed across the sea at top speed, which gave rise to a few meters of tidal waves.

The deep blue sea was far from being capable at concealing its body. Its four rock-like limbs were moving swiftly in the water. As it charged towards them rapidly, a few kilometers of seawater around it started to get more and more erratic. The sea water violently splashed up against the coast.

When it got really close, Luo Yuan could finally see it clearly.

Unlike the giant lizard, its mutation was not as serious. Luo Yuan recognized its origins with just one look. No doubt, it was a mutated [archelon](#), albeit a very large one. It was thirty to forty

meters in diameter. His giant lizard paled in comparison.

Archelon (from Greek αρχελών meaning ruler turtle) is a genus of extinct sea turtles, the largest genus of sea turtles that has ever been documented, and the second-heaviest turtles documented behind Stupendemys.

It was a dull grey archelon; its shell was full of rough formations of sharp, jagged edges. The spikes were glistening in the dark. Compared to an average archelon, its neck was much longer and thicker. Its head looked mutated and crooked teeth filled its wide mouth, making it a hideous sight to behold. This archelon definitely looked horrifying as compared to ordinary archelons.

Luo Yuan held his breath, glanced once and quickly looked away, clearly uncomfortable. Although this creature was still far away, he could feel a sense of discomfort, as he turned to see where his giant lizard was. It was at least a few hundreds meters away.

It was already hiding in a corner. It could be an assumption, but he could actually feel the giant lizard quivering in fear.

“Hongggg!” suddenly there was a loud noise coming from afar.

The Bay Bridge shook violently. Its steel cables that were as thick as an adult man’s arm twisted under the immense force, giving out to the force with a screeching sound. As the steel cables continued to snap one after another, they flailed across the night sky and before long, more than a dozen sections of the Bay Bridge crumbled like a stack of dominos.

Luo Yuan's heart skipped a beat. He could not care less about the vigorous shaking of the bridge. He quickly held onto a guardrail that was also shaking vigorously, and looked towards the bottom. A very large pier was also knocked down effortlessly by the giant beast. It was reduced to a rubble now as it crashed into pieces.

He was bewildered. Bay Bridge was a very strong and solid structure. An ordinary ship would never be able to wreck the whole thing, let alone tear it down. Unless of course it was a large ship that weighed ten thousand tonnes that crashed into the bridge at top speed, nothing else would even come close to destroying it.

Previously, he thought it was a light green level creature. But now, he was unsure.

Luo Yuan didn't understand much about sea creatures. He had no idea about the situation at present as well but what he could confirm was that the sea creatures' abilities were much more powerful than those of land creatures. Competition amongst the sea creatures was more intense too.

In the final days of China, with the exception of specially protected area and primeval forests, large creatures were very rare. They did not even habitate the villages, let alone the city centre. Back in the 17th & 18th century, wolves, wild boars and medium sized creatures still existed in the mountainous area. However, just before the end they had all disappeared, not even a trace of their shadows could be seen. Even rabbits could hardly be found as well.

Only domestic animals and pets were able to survive in the country. Large quantities of mutations were slaughtered even

before the dawn of the apocalypse. Most of the large beasts were actually mutated from the smaller creatures. Even humans had to slowly retreat in defeat what more the larger species of marine life.

After the giant archelon swam across the Bay Bridge, it never stopped and continued moving forward.

It eventually disappeared from his line of vision after a few minutes. Luo Yuan let out a sigh of relief. Thankfully it had left or else he would only be able to evacuate at midnight.

He touched his forehead and without realizing it, his forehead was already drenched in sweat. His body felt a little weak while his face was bitter with thoughts. Even standing near a creature of this level without engaging in combat was torture enough. He wondered what the others who were several hundred meters away in the defensive fortifications would feel. It probably wouldn't stray far from what he was feeling.

However, he had some questions running through his mind. Sea creatures were from the sea. Why on earth is this monster here?

It was the monsoon season after all, and this was the ocean. But most of the regions here were mudflats. Even the biggest ocean couldn't possibly be home to such a huge creature.

According to the theory of evolution, the first creatures to walk the land from the ocean were the weaker ones who were chased away after losing in a fight but from the looks of it, it shouldn't have any trouble surviving in the ocean. It should not have even

felt compelled to escape to land.

Curiosity got the better of him, and motivated him to go and take a look.

He looked at the time. It was not even one o'clock in the wee hours of the morning yet. He hesitated for a while, but knowing that the creature was now far away, it should no longer be dangerous. He then dashed back to shore.

The coast of the Bay Bridge had almost become a forest but since the land was both saline and alkaline, the undergrowth seemed to be quite scarce. Firefly-looking insects that were about the size of a fist were prancing about in the forest. Some lightly glowing plants that were located in the near distance added a splash of color to the lustrous and dazzling view.

Luo Yuan was running at top speed in the forest. He ran as fast as lighting. His agility knows no boundaries. The trees on his left and right fell backwards due to the force of his speed.

After half an hour, he climbed up a big tree to get a bird's eye view of the surrounding and its vicinity.

The sky that was full of dark clouds, hardly revealed the full moon.

The distance from where he stood and the giant archelon was only under three kilometers. It was already about to leave the sea.

Under the chilly night, it climbed back to the mudflats. There was a pin-drop silence. All creatures were trying their best to hide themselves during this tense situation. The sound of crickets that was heard every night was not heard tonight because of the immense fear.

Luo Yuan held his breath, and did not move a muscle.

The giant archelon walked up to a higher ground and stopped in its tracks. The big and hideous head turned and looked around, almost as if it was keeping a watch. When its eyes turned towards Luo Yuan's direction, it slightly paused its movements.

Being stared by its fiery eyes in the dark, Luo Yuan felt as if his head was about to burst. His heartbeat stopped and he almost turned and ran away.

Fortunately, it quickly diverted its glance and continued looking around towards other directions.

Luo Yuan's chest expanded and contracted heavily. He had used all his effort to suppress the fear in his heart.

At that moment, he clearly sensed that he had been identified by the giant archelon. His methods of hiding was useless in front of this creature. However, it seemed like it did not mind his existence. Maybe he was only an insignificant speck in the archelon's eyes.

When Luo Yuan did not know whether he should leave or stay, the giant archelon started digging with its four limbs like a powerful excavator. The land very soon became a forty to fifty meter wide hole, with the depth of the hole unbeknownst to all. After a few minutes, it stopped digging.

It leaned towards the hole, without moving. Its tail tightly stuck to the mouth of the hole.

Did it mean....

Luo Yuan's heart moved. As expected, a turn of events verified his prediction. The giant archelon whimpered in low spirits. That voice was laced with some pain. After some time, it slowly stood up and continued digging. With the remnants of mud and sand, it covered back the hole well.

After it settled the deed, it did not leave immediately. It continued to look around. This time, it did so even more carefully. Back and forth, it took a few minutes to look around. Under Luo Yuan's anxious gaze, it slowly moved back to the sea. It looked very weak; it was limping.

If it was a normal light green level creature, it could have been the perfect chance. However, facing this sea creature with a level he could not identify, he was incapable to even conjure the thought.

It walked towards the sea. Under the glistening moonlight, it swiftly moved towards the direction it came from, and disappeared

eventually.

Luo Yuan was still hiding on top of the tree without moving. After half an hour, when the coast was clear, he jumped down from the tree and rushed towards the shore.

After a few minutes, he walked towards the high ground. Despite the departure of the giant archelon, its breath was still left there. But this powerless breath had no effect on Luo Yuan, who possessed 15 points of Will.

The hole was as big as three basketball courts in total, with its depth still unknown. Luo Yuan stood on the ground and awakened his senses. A sudden ray of happiness filled his heart. It came here all the way out from the sea, only to lay its eggs!

But alas, there was only one egg. This was entirely normal. As nature has it, a stronger creature would be less likely to succeed in reproduction. On the other hand, weaker creatures had no complications reproducing. If it reproduced like archelons before the apocalypse, laying hundreds of eggs each time, it would occupy the entire ocean.

Unfortunately, he did not have any suitable tools. Knives were okay for killing, but not for digging. He could only use his bare hands.

He hung his knives on the side, standing at the middle of the muddy soil and started digging with his very own hands.

It comprised of only soft and muddy soil; needing little to no effort to dig through. In addition to that, as the giant archelon came to lay its egg, the mutated creatures in the sand escaped from the area as they sensed its vicious breath. Those that did not make it into hiding were also paralyzed because of its breath. After a few moments, he realized that he wasn't even thinking the creatures as there were none around him that posed a threat.

However, the egg was buried too deep. Approximately twenty meters in depth, he was afraid that if he tried to dig it out tonight, he wouldn't be able to sleep.

However, he obviously overestimated his digging ability.

It is be impossible to dig a hole over twenty metres deep especially with this kind of soft, mud flat. If we did anyway, it would just collapse and cover itself up. The egg was over two meters in height, its outermost layer seemed to be wrapped by a thick, transparent substance. Its size exceeded five meters in length. If the hole he dug was too small, not only will it collapse, the egg would not be able to be taken out as well.

This wouldn't have been done without a strategy. He can only replicate the size of the hole that the giant archelon dug. No doubt, it was a good progress.

Luo Yuan had only been digging for half an hour, and he was already feeling a bit dejected. Looking at that one meter wide and half meter deep hole, he could only smile bitterly in his heart. He may have to dig for three days and three nights to get to the egg but if it rained in between, he would have to start all over again.

Suddenly, his expression changed.

He must have gone bonkers! Why must he dig it up all by himself? Didn't he have the giant lizard at his disposal? Although it can't be compared to the giant archelon, but with the giant lizard it wouldn't take too long either.

Chapter 150: Process To Deal With

Not long after that, Luo Yuan came back with the giant lizard.

Under Luo Yuan's instruction, the giant lizard began to dig a hole rapidly. Massive amounts of mud was hurled backwards in rapid succession. The hole that had been closed by the giant archelon, was dug open once again.

Even so, it took two hours before he could see the huge egg. Luo Yuan was afraid that the giant lizard was going to eat it, like how it ate the fruit of the Sky's Tree, so he hurriedly asked it to back off.

Luo Yuan slid down the walls of the mud hole and walked all the way to the bottom. The giant lizard's work was clearly not meticulous enough, as it only managed to expose the upper half of the huge egg. The other half of the egg was still covered with mud. After Luo Yuan finished the job, only then could the huge egg be seen in its entirety.

This was a two meter tall, over one meter wide huge oval egg. This does not even include its thick colorless transparent gel layer, about half a meter thick, yet. As compared to an ordinary egg, its outermost later had complex patterns, bringing a sense of mystery.

The outermost gel layer looked very smooth and silky, and was soft to the touch. It was very bouncy, just like rubber. Luo Yuan tried to cut it by using his zhanmadao but the gel layer was impenetrable. The more strength he exerted, the harder the gel bounced back. It was an arduous task to even cut it up with his

Will.

With this, it's no wonder the archelon did not have a worry in the world and did not mind leaving its egg here. Only unless one's ability was above the light green level, this layer of gel would be more than enough to prevent most creatures from harming it. Light green level creatures can rarely be found in the whole Jiangnan Province anyway. As compared to the highly dangerous ocean, the land was no doubt the best place for ocean creatures to reproduce for the future and safety of their new generation.

Luo Yuan did not manage to break it on the spot. This egg was very heavy, and weighed more than one ton. Even after removing the gel, it would not weigh less than one ton. Despite his thirteen points of strength, he could barely move it, let alone yank it out to the surface of ground from above a twenty meter deep, muddy hole. His amount of strength was not enough to push it out what more dragging it for about seven to eight kilometers to the defensive site. The whole journey was full of pits and potholes. Even if he successfully managed to push it all the way to his destination, it would take him at least a good seven or eight hours.

With that protective layer of gel, he would not need to worry about the giant lizard snatching or gobbling the egg up. Even if it did managed to get the egg into its mouth, it would still be unable to bite it.

The poor giant lizard had to be put to work again. It bit the huge egg and rushed back. Unless there was nothing to do, not assigning the lizard any work is silly.

By the time Luo Yuan got back to the defensive site, the sky was already darkening. After the giant lizard put down the huge egg, and he chased it aside.

When Luo Yuan got back previously, he had already told everyone about this. After they heard that the giant beast was here to give birth, and that he would be moving the huge egg back, how could they possibly sleep with such news? Everyone had ran out when they heard a sound.

They walked out. Once they saw the huge egg, all of them was taken by surprise.

“This is the egg. It’s so enormous! Definitely taller than every one of us.” Huang Jiahui said in amazement.

“I reckon even a dinosaur egg wouldn’t be as huge.” Luo Yuan also said in bewilderment. He touched its outer gel layer out of curiosity and was surprised, “How could it still be so cold?”

Then, everyone followed suit and touched it. All of them were busy discussing the matter. They were very excited; even Zhao Yali who was feeling uneasy, could not control her curiosity and touched it as well.

Both Wang Shishi’s eyes were gleaming. She was already jealous of the fact that Luo Yuan had a giant lizard as a pet earlier. Now, that they had one more egg, she quickly pulled the corner of his shirt, and fawningly said: “Brother Luo, gift me this egg, okay?”

Everyone apart from Zhao Yali, who already had Lao Huang, everyone else's smile faded. This was a mutated beast's egg, what more an egg with a terrifying ability. Everyone understood what it meant. Once it hatched, it could do whatever it wanted in the future.

“You don't have to look any further. This egg is too huge, nobody knows when will it hatch. Even when it hatches, we would never know if it can ever be tamed. Bringing it along with us in our journey would be far too dangerous.” Luo Yuan muttered himself and shook his head.

Mutated beasts are not just any creatures that can be easily tamed. These mutated beasts were born brutal. How the giant lizard was able to be tamed was because of the painful lesson it learnt! Should its ability evolve again, it would have the tendency to betray them once more. For Lao Huang, it was a special case. Its ex-host had left an indelible impact. Canines are generally more loyal, they are less inclined to betray their owners. Even if it was mutated, its good behaviour was passed down by generation after generation of ancestors.

If it was a normal creature, Luo Yuan would have brought it along, albeit with caution. But, the egg was too scary. The moment it hatches, it would already be a young green level creature.

“Can't we just eat it as food?” Huang Jiahui said surprisingly, “Let's not waste this chance.”

“Waste? This is not a waste at all. This is an egg laid by a sixth level creature. If I'm not mistaken, it will bring a lot benefit to all

of you, if you were to consume it.” Luo Yuan said in a deep voice. Even a blue level creature was already sufficient to improve their capabilities, let alone green level ones. Luo Yuan guessed that a green level creature’s flesh could at least raise some abilities up to twelve points.

“Sixth level...” Everyone sighed. For them, level three was already a nightmare. The giant lizard was also only a level four. Level six was something almost unimaginable.

In fact, its benefits did not stop there. Apart from what Luo Yuan already mentioned, its outer gel layer and even the eggshell were all valuable resources. The gel, with its durable bouncy substance, was best used for making bulletproof suits. Even without additional abilities, the bouncy substance alone could yield very high buffering powers when under attack. It was capable of reducing injuries to the bare minimum.

After his snake scale bulletproof vest broke, Luo Yuan’s defense had decreased a lot. This was apparent during the last beast attack, he did not only sustained serious injuries; he almost died there.

There were already a few bulletproof suits in the weapon warehouse. It was not like they were lacking of any materials, it just seemed befitting to make a brand new one.

As for the eggshell, it could become the perfect weapon. His zhanmadao was actually amalgamated with the tree bark of the Sky’s Tree. It was not able to amalgamate with other materials of the same grade. Besides, being able to absorb life energy was too important. If it was not necessary, Luo Yuan would not see a need

for change, however, it can be built for someone else.

For instance, Wang Shishi's flying shuttle, as well as some bullets.

Thinking of the sniper rifle in the weapon warehouse, an epiphany flashed through Luo Yuan's mind. He could use a heavy sniper rifle, to shoot out green level bullets. How strong was its power?

Next, Luo Yuan used his Will, and with a knife, he circulated the outermost gel layer of the huge egg. He cut it carefully. Once he cut a small hole, a compressed smell slowly diffused into air. People who were surrounding him were repulsed, and backed off far away. They were suffocated and turned pale.

As the gel completely fell off from the egg leaving it no longer suppressing its contents, its smell completely leaked out. As a green level creature, even as just a tiny egg, the smell it emitted was much more pungent than that of a giant lizard.

Even Luo Yuan's heart raced, as though crushed by a stone.

The smell was almost the same as the giant archelon, albeit slightly weaker, it still had its similarities.

Frustration and impulse filled the Giant Lizard's lightbulb-like eyes. It stared at the huge egg without blinking. Its instincts could sense that if it were to eat the egg, it would be very beneficial for

itself. As time passed, its eyes soon turned red with desire, and it drooled greedily.

Luo Yuan suddenly shifted its focus onto the egg too, as he experienced signs of himself spiralling out of control. His body was itching to have a go as well.

His heart turned cold. It seems that the huge egg was immensely tempting. He was far beyond rational by now, and decided not to stand there any longer.

He quickly reprimanded it loudly. After hearing Luo Yuan's voice, the giant lizard slowly got back to its senses. It shook its big head, snorted in angst and reluctantly stepped back.

He opened the properties panel with an uneasy look on his face. He found that the loyalty of Giant Lizard had dropped dramatically, from a peak of 80 to 70.

"Little Yuan, what happened to the giant lizard?" Zhao Yali was a bit shocked and asked nervously.

The giant lizard was too fierce. Lao Huang appeared to be tamer in comparison. It never behaved that way in front of her.

"Luo Yuan's face sunk, he forcefully smiled, "Nothing, it will be okay after some time."

It would be better if he did not say anything. Everyone became

more nervous after hearing what he said. Anyone could also see that Luo Yuan was trying too hard to convince them, especially with the fact that the giant lizard had a bad track record.

Luo Yuan kept staring at the properties panel. He could only be relieved after he found that the loyalty had no changes after it hit 68 points. Suddenly he realized that he has no remedy for a giant lizard who was out of control.

Without realizing, the ability of the giant lizard had already surpassed him by leaps and bounds. With only fifteen points of agility, it could already pummel him to the ground. He had to slow the giant lizard's evolution progress down. Else, once it starts to betray him, he would not even have any methods of damage control.

Chapter 151: Lucky One

“Delivery liquid of Archelon;”

“Rarity: Green”

“Weight: 35kg”

“Additional ability: Massive absorption of physical and strength attacks;”

“Remarks: This is a special collagen secreted by the archelon in the process of laying eggs. It is to protect their eggs from external harm during the incubation, and ensure they come to the earth safely, with no complications.”

Luo Yuan picked up a small piece, assessed it for a short while, and his face lit up with joy. This piece does not only absorb physical attacks, it could also be assimilated with strength attacks. It was more wonderful than what he initially thought. Indeed, it deserves to be a green level material. He still did not know what the effect of this egg was, making him look forward to finding out what it could do.

“Hurry, get me a wooden barrel.” Luo Yuan held his knife and said.

Very soon, someone brought a wooden barrel for him.

That enormous egg was way too big to fit in that wooden barrel. But, Luo Yuan certainly did not plan to pour out all the liquid contained within the egg. For an enormous egg like this, it was alright to have some of it go to waste.

The energy content of the green ranked food was extraordinary. For ordinary people, just consuming a little of it was enough to keep them satiated for an entire day. Conservatively, this enormous egg could feed everyone for a month! There might even be leftovers, provided that the condition did not deteriorate.

Luo Yuan raised the point of the knife. He focused his Will at the tip of the knife and it let out a dim glow. At the very next moment, he stabbed it straight into the egg shell.

He could feel a strong resistance. His Will was depleted just as quick as running water would flow out of a container. Fortunately, the eggshell was not very thick. Luo Yuan held on for a while, exerted his energy a little, and the tip of the knife made it into the egg. Luo Yuan continued his efforts and after a few seconds, the eggshell had been punctured with a small hole, approximately 5-centimeters in size.

The eggshell was seven or eight centimeters thick. It was very compact and hard. Other than its three-millimeter outermost layer that comprised a rough material, the rest was almost transparent. The whole thing shone with a jade-like kind of light. Instead of calling it an eggshell, it could pass off as shards of crystal.

In fact, he was totally thinking too much. Because even when the eggshell was now broken, there was no eggwhite flowing out. Luo Yuan cut a piece from inside. The egg liquid on the tip of knife was so crystal clear, wobbled like jelly, and emitted a strange smell, but not a bad one.

Luo Yuan secretly used an appraisal technique:

“Egg white of Archelon”

“Purpose: Food supply”

“Rarity: Green”

“Weight: 10”

“Effect: 1. Slightly improves the human physique, 2. Slightly improves human strength, 3. Slightly increases human agility, 4. Chance for human evolution, 5. Chance to harness a technique to breathe underwater.”

“Remark: It is a superfood. Compared to its tenacious flesh after growing up, the egg white that was still in the form of an infant is more delicious and easy to consume. It consists of a massive amount of strength, improving the human physique and may even induce evolution.

Despite Luo Yuan having predicted all this, he was still shocked by its effect. If memory served him right, blue level food usually had a disadvantage to the human body. This time however, it had a small probability to evolve and even a chance at harnessing the ability to breathe underwater. It doesn't seem like an evolutionary ability or it would have been listed individually.

After that, he swallowed the egg white.

The egg white was cool and refreshing, It eased smoothly all the way down his throat. Compared to bloody meat and flesh, the egg white was so much more superior in terms of its texture. An explosive fiery feeling rose in his stomach as soon as he swallowed the egg white. Very soon, that feeling spread through his entire body, there was like a fire burning in his body. His body temperature rose all the way up, and his stomach was bloated. He also felt strangely hyperactive. Even his Will was recovering rapidly.

Since his properties were raised dramatically, the blue level food was sub-par to him now. It had been a long time since he last felt a burning sensation all over his body.

“Luo Yuan, is there a problem?” Huang Jiahui asked, with her face flushed red.

A scorching hot breath puffed through his mouth. He laughed and said, “Nothing's wrong, the effect of this egg white was too strong. Don't eat too much in one go. If we're lucky, there may be one more evolution that may happen among us.”

Huo Dong could hardly conceal his excitement after he heard how serious Luo Yuan said this. Evolution, who wouldn't want themselves to evolve. Look at Luo Yuan and Wang Shishi, they have terrifying abilities and as time passes, the gap between their abilities kept increasing, soon they would be superman.

Anxious and uneasy feelings were torturing him every day. For evolved humans, an ordinary human like him was a total burden. Not only can they be of no help but they would also delay progress. Luo Yuan only bought them along out of sympathy but harsh reality is that this kind of sympathy will one day run out. It is likely that he could not even wait for that time to come.

Evolve, this time it has to happen!

Luo Yuan looked at the desire in those eyes and his heart sank. This journey was too dangerous. If they did not successfully evolve, they may fall after the other before they could even reach the West. Hopefully, there will be more evolutions this time.

Luo Yuan scooped the egg white up once again and cut them into pieces. Other than Lin Xiaoji who got a bit more, the rest of them all had only a few grams of it. The effect of green level food was too overwhelming for ordinary humans. They should not take too much.

Despite having consumed only a little, Wang Xianguang and Zhao Yali started having serious nosebleeds. The condition of the others were better but not by much. Their skin got so red that it seemed

as if they had just come out of a battle.

Suddenly, Chen Xianfeng fainted without a sign, shocking everyone.

Aside from Zhao Yali and Wang Xianguang who were greatly concerned because they have not witnessed such a thing before, the expressions on Huo Dong's and the others' faces were laced with discomfort. Possibly admiration with a slight hint of jealousy; it was hard to decipher how they actually felt.

“Sighhh”, Huo Dong sighed lightly. Even after consuming the egg white, the excitement could hardly overcome his gloom. He walked to the door, searched for a while, and found a cigarette that had been smoked halfway. Just when he about to light the cigarette, someone patted him on the shoulder. It was Lin Xiaoji.

“Any more cigarettes?” He asked.

Huo Dong was surprised. Lin Xiaoji was an introvert and always seemed arrogant. He rarely talked to him, but today he took the initiative and tried to get a cigarette from him. He froze for a moment before coming to his senses again saying, “I only have a cigarette butt, do you want it?”

Huo Dong saw Lin Xiaoji hesitating but in the end he nodded in agreement.

This person simply does not know how to act like a decent

human being, making little to no effort to even appear decent. It's no wonder his relationship with the ladies was so bad. He sighed to himself and found some creased tobacco in his pocket. From there, he groped for a slightly longer cigarette butt and passed it to him along with a lighter. He had nothing to say but still, he tried to keep the conversation alive and said "Nowadays, it is hard to even find cigarettes. I usually smoke a puff or two before putting it out, just to satisfy my craving."

Lin Xiaoji lit the cigarette and took a deep puff. He was choking and coughed uncontrollably. He instantly threw it on the floor and stepped on it to put it off. Huo Dong saw him doing this and felt it was such a waste. After a while, he sighed and softly said, "I would've never expected Chen Xianfeng to evolve, such a lucky s*it."

"Aren't you an evolved character too?" Huo Dong asked, astonished.

"My kind of evolved ability is totally useless. Other than healing myself, I am no different than an ordinary human. How can I be considered as an evolved human?. This world is so unfair." he said with dissatisfaction, looking as if he was defeated. He was an arrogant person and being an evolved human supported his aura. Although he had been under the shadow of Luo Yuan all this time, he still maintained an arrogant outlook in front of ordinary people. He would have never thought that this time, even the obscure Chen Xiaofeng could become an evolved human, how could he not feel defeated?

Huo Dong squinted and evil arose in his heart. "You're already an

evolved human, yet you still complain about it being unfair. Who should we, the ordinary people go to then?” He realized there and then that Chen Xianfeng becoming an evolved human put his heart and mind at unrest.

Nevertheless, he was still a cunning person and knew that these words could only be spoken in the heart. He took a deep puff and said in a whisper, “Fairness? Where do we find fairness in this world? The fact that we’re now alive while others are not is already the biggest injustice. We should be counting our lucky stars for still being alive today, don’t tell me you’re still longing to have powers like Boss Luo?”

“Don’t you want it?” Lin Xiaoji responded by asking.

Huo Dong remained silent for a while, took a deep puff, then carefully put out the cigarette butt and put it into his cigarette box. He stood up and said, “Yes, of course, I want it but I clearly know that there is no one who can attain the highest level with a single step. All powerful abilities must be trained.”

After that, he did not care about Lin Xiaoji’s face. He stood up and went back into the room. He saw Luo Yuan who was slitting the eggshell slowly using the knife. Suddenly, he recalled something Luo Yuan said yesterday, “There is no internal power, at least not that I know of. It is not incredible either, it is just the function of Will. You will all understand when you can muster all your Will.”

Everyone has Will. If one is able to attain such an ability by just concentrating their Will, their strength will definitely not be

worse off even compared to an evolved human.

Since he could not become an evolved human, he would first learn to concentrate his Will.

Huo Dong secretly held his fist. Looking at Chen Xianfeng who was still lying down, he steeled his heart.

Chapter 152: Failed Evolution

“What happened to him? Luo Yuan, hurry! Come and see!” Huang Jiahui’s voice had a tinge of fear, interrupting Luo Yuan who was slicing a hardboiled egg.

His heartbeat became a little erratic. Luo Yuan kept his knife back into its sheath and hastened there. Looking at Chen Xianfeng’s body, he had a bad feeling.

Chen Xianfeng’s condition did not seem right. He was having uncontrollable muscle spasms. His hair was falling off bunch by bunch. Even his nails were growing unnaturally fast and did not resemble those of a human’s anymore. The tips were pointed and glowing in black with a metallic lustre, looking extremely sharp. What was more horrifying was that his flesh started to grow a rough, horned layer, that covered his whole body like an armor.

“It’s dangerous here. Everybody, back off!” Luo Yuan did not hesitate with his command.

Even if he had not commanded so, everyone had already moved four or five meters away.

“Didn’t he evolve? How could this happen?” Zhao Yali carefully took a look at Chen Xianfeng and asked.

“I’m not so sure. It seems that evolving has a certain fail rate. Chen Xianfeng probably failed to evolve.” Luo Yuan said. He realized this abnormal phenomenon resembled the corpse of Wang

Xiaguang's father that he saw in the laboratory previously.

The crowd was amazed, but did not look too amused. Looking at Chen Xianfeng's condition, they suddenly did not know if they were lucky enough to not have to experience becoming an evolved human.

“What happens if an evolutions fail?” Cao Lin suddenly asked.

Luo Yuan glanced at her and said, “If the condition is severe, it may cause death because of the genetic breakdown. Else, he may be stuck being neither human nor beast. The final outcome of whether he is able to keep his human nature and form is all dependent on his Will now.”

Wang Xiaguang's father was like that. At first, everything was still normal. He still continued living with his wife. Nobody noticed anything strange. However, as time passed, the nature of the beast within him started affected him more and more. He eventually started devouring humans but throughout the entire ordeal, he has never harmed his wife and daughter proving once and for all that with strong Will, the beastly instincts could be overcome.

But, Chen Xianfeng's evolution was more aggressive compared to Wang Xiaguang's father. All changes were completed rapidly in a short period of time unlike her father whose condition worsened over time. What would become of her was something he was unable to determine.

“Is there nothing we can do?” Huang Jiahui eyes teared up.

The rest harboured a heavy feeling in their hearts as well. Although Chen Xianfeng was a man of a few words and his presence was insignificant to others, having spent so much time together made them feel a certain connection to him.

“This is a fight on the genetic level. No treatment would be of help. He can only depend on himself.” Luo Yuan understood her feeling, but there is no way he can stop a change on the genetic level.

Then, his bones started exploding like firecrackers. Muscles all over his body were also expanding rapidly, bulging beneath his shirt. It seemed as if he has broken the barriers of human growth as his body grew taller by more than twenty centimeters within a few minutes, showing no signs of slowing down.

Luo Yuan’s expression changed. He will perish if this continues. The human body is only capable of so much and would not be able to cope with growth at such an intense level. If this does not stop, his body could break down anytime soon.

Ordinary food no longer had the ability to keep him nourished as his body depleted it faster than it could be replenished. The only way for him to stay alive would be to continue eating highly nutritious food.

Luo Yuan hesitated for a few seconds before rushing towards the huge egg. This may aggravate his condition and possibly even

cause him to lose his mind when he awakes. However, as long as there was a glimmer of hope that he would be alright, Luo Yuan refused to give up.

He took out his knife and dug up a big piece of egg white, opened his mouth and fed it to him. Then, he took a pack of tree sap and fed it to him as well.

The piece of egg was much bigger than the one Luo Yuan ate earlier. The nourishment from that piece of egg white was no joke, even Luo Yuan would be worried of getting a nosebleed from that big a piece. If an ordinary person were to eat it, it would certainly end up with them burning to death. However, at the rate Chen Xianfeng is growing, this did not apply to him.

As the egg white was put into his mouth, his originally pale white face became a glowing bright red, but faded just as it appeared. At the same time, his body growth sped up even more.

His shirt was clinging tightly against his body, akin to an adult wearing children's clothing. It restricted his movements uncomfortably. Luo Yuan was prepared to cut his clothes with a knife, "Shi-lakk!" the clothes came undone and revealed frightening, abnormal muscles.

Luo Yuan sighed. Although the level of his clothes were not high, it was still of blue level. Even with his thirteen points of strength, all his efforts to tear it off was all in vain as it would require more than fifteen points to get the job done.

The growth due to his evolution is just amazing!

Chen Xianfeng's skin had totally changed. It was covered with a thick, horned layer, just like a suit of armor. His chest expanded and contracted while his nostrils shot out streams of steam. Due to the cells in his body that were furiously breaking down and regenerating at the same time, his body temperature had already gone up to 70 degrees Celsius. Luo Yuan could feel the heat blowing towards his direction, even though he was standing a few meters away.

After a minute, his growth slowed down and his breaths were staggered due to his depleted energy. Luo Yuan hesitated for a while and walked in front of the huge egg.

“Luo Yuan.....!” Huang Jiahui couldn't help but to shout, looking very pale.

Luo Yuan turned back and looked at the crowd. He notice the unease on everyone's face. He remained silent for a moment and slowly said, “This is the last time. All of you, back off further away”

Of course he knew it was very dangerous. He noticed that the breath of Chen Xianfeng is close to that of a blue level mutated beast's. If he swallowed the egg white again, he could very well reach a dark blue level immediately. If that happens, it would be a burden even to Luo Yuan.

At the very least however, if he did not even attempt but

immediately gave up, Chen Xianfeng would have no chance of ever waking up. Besides, Luo Yuan was curious to see the extent of Chen Xianfeng's evolution.

As he was fed the egg white, his growth sped up once again. Two point five meters, two point seven meters, three meters. As he reached three meters, his growth stopped once more but this time his breathing was steady while his body temperature decreased slowly.

Luo Yuan knew he would eventually regain consciousness, his hand pressing silently against the handle of his zhanmadao.

As everyone stood at the doorway watching from afar, the atmosphere in the hall became tense.

Slightly more than ten seconds later, Chen Xianfeng's heavy eyelids twitched and opened to reveal his now green eyes. Looking at the ceiling, his pupils contracted and dilated several times until he could focus clearly.

As he slowly sat up, he had a confused look on his face. Zhao Yali covered her mouth, trying her level best not to scream as she saw him. At over three meters high, he looked like a giant. Even sitting down he was the same height as an upright Luo Yuan.

Chen Xianfeng suddenly noticed Luo Yuan, who was nearby. He was clearly stunned as his vision was made inaccurate by his staggering height. He tried opening his mouth to speak but what came out was a husky, deep voice.

He looked at his body before trembling in fear. “Ahhhhhhh!” he roared in pain and stood up furiously.

Clearly, he has not adapted to his new body. His newfound power made him collapse just as soon as he stood up. His body fell clumsily onto a burnt office table nearby, breaking it down to mere dust and smoke flying in all directions.

He attempted to stand once again, but fell down nonetheless.

After repeatedly trying several times, he finally showed just how strong his new body could be. Unleashing all his strength he roared continuously and punched the ground with all his might. Innumerable rocks flew everywhere as his fists landed on the ground one after the other, smashing the land beneath him. Even the defensive camp started quivering.

“Honggg, honggg, hongg....”

After several seconds passed, the ground near the defensive camp site had a half meter deep hole dug out by his fist. A few exposed concrete iron bars that were as thick as two fingers were also twisted by his amazing strength.

He suddenly stopped hammering and turned his gaze to Luo Yuan. His eyes giving off a brutal, violent glimmer. He stood up shakily and roared like the beast he seemed to be.

“Chen Xianfeng, do you want me to wake you up?” Luo Yuan suddenly rebuked.

The cold voice was laced with an intent to kill. It made Chen Xianfeng come to his senses, leaving behind the beastly, animalistic emotions that took over just a few seconds ago. Luo Yuan had made a lasting impression on him that reduced him to shivers. Instinctively, he backed off and his eyes turned back to normal.

“I.....I.....What happened to me?” stammered Chen Xianfeng in an apprehensive voice.

As he opened his mouth, Luo Yuan immediately noticed his tongue had branched into two. His canine teeth also grew much bigger. One way or the other, he was no longer human.

Seeing as he has somewhat come to his senses, Luo Yuan heaved a sigh of relief. However, he kept his grip tightly on his knife as he answered him, “You’ve failed to evolve but your body had already undergone some changes. You were lucky to survive but can you hold on to your senses?”

“I.....don’t.....don’t know” He shook his head in agony, and said “very.....frustrated, but ...I ... can.....hold on.”

Watching at Chen Xianfeng trying to take control of his senses, the rest had finally dared to come closer. Chen Xianfeng nervously looked at the crowd in an aggressive manner. His vision was slightly blurred and he was clenching his fist subconsciously.

Luo Yuan was shocked when he saw how the changes in his genetics due to the evolution had adversely influenced his temper.

“Chen Xianfeng, can you still recognize us?” Huo Dong asked in fear.

“I.....can.....recognize... all...” Chen Xianfeng said in a suppressed voice. His eyes casting violent glances every now and then. His face was very agitated as well. Nevertheless, he kept it well under control.

“It’s great that you were able to recover. Although you had only semi-evolved, your abilities have become much stronger. As long as you’ve managed to survive, there is nothing more to ask for. You have to keep going, you must be strong.” Cao Lin encouraged him.

“Yeah, your strength was amazing. I thought the building was going to collapse.” Wang Shishi added on. She was not afraid. Instead, she was only staring at him out of curiosity.

Everyone hastened to comfort him until Luo Yuan stepped in to stop them.

He noticed that Chen Xianfeng’s fidgeting became more and more apparent. He was obviously irritated with everyone preaching at him, almost unable to control his emotions.

“He needs a quiet environment. Leave him be for awhile.” Luo Yuan said.

Chapter 153: Stay

Chen Xianfeng staggered as he left his room. At first, he could not stand steadily, but soon his movements became smoother. He walked out to the garden and took a few steps before he started running. The faster he ran, the more hideous his face looked. Finally, he let out a loud, weird growl from his mouth.

Hearing his beast-like growl from a distance, everyone in the hall went quiet. Their thoughts were complicated to say the least.

“He is too dangerous...” Cao Lin said, her head bowed down. She dared not look at the others.

Although she had not said it outright, her meaning was obvious. No normal person would want to live around a ticking bomb. Judging by his actions just now, his emotions were very unstable. If Luo Yuan wasn't there, he would have already lost control.

“Yeah, his eyes looked just like a beast's,” Zhao Yali said anxiously.

“But he is still our friend,” Huang Jiahui said in a low voice after hesitating for a while. She knew that Zhao Yali was right. Chen Xiangfeng was indeed very dangerous now. Maybe his temporary soft-hearted will had caused irreparable damage. However, she did not have the heart to give up on him.

“He has already changed. He is no longer the Chen Xianfeng we knew. You heard Brother Luo, his condition might become more

serious in the future. Letting him stay with us would not be safe. Plus, he may have a better life if we let him go,” Cao Lin said, biting her lips.

Luo Yuan was also struggling to make a decision. The power of the growth from his evolution was terrifying to say the least. Within a short period of time, Chen Xianfeng had already grown from an ordinary person to a dark blue level human. The giant archelon's genes that had entered his body hasn't shown its full potential yet, but the archelon's power could already be seen.

If Chen Xianfeng could successfully control the ruthless emotions running through his body, he could grow into a very formidable ally in the future.

To be honest though, Luo Yuan was not very optimistic.

Even if the beast genes did not affect one's rationality, it was still a challenge for a normal human's temperament to suddenly get so much stronger. That much strength will definitely arouse destructive intentions and corrode one's rationality, making them act willfully. To add insult to injury, Chen Xianfeng's body had been possessed by green level mutated beast genes.

Chen Xianfeng used to bear all duties by himself without complaint. No matter how tired or dirty he was, he would never say a word. It would be really cold and heartless to just give up on him like that. Luo Yuan remained silent for a while before he said, “Let's observe him for a few more days. I will watch him. If he loses control of his emotions, then we will have to let him go.”

If he really loses control, then Luo Yuan could not be blamed for it.

This had all happened too suddenly, forcing them to delay their original plan to depart.

Nevertheless, there was nothing they could do. Massive egg yolks were divided by the women and smoked into cubes, which were wrapped tightly in cleaned fish skin. This kind of food was no doubt a precious strategic resource. Despite its small size, the amount of heat it contained was sufficient to sustain anyone for a day, excluding Luo Yuan and Chen Xianfeng. If it was stored well, it could be preserved for more than half a year.

The gel layer of the eggshell had been used to synthesize Luo Yuan's bulletproof vest. Because there had been a sufficient amount, Luo Yuan had synthesized five bulletproof vests in total. Except for a dark blue level one, the rest were all green level.

The new bulletproof vest had a crystal-like, semi-transparent colour. Its surface had a fibre texture to it and it was much lighter. The metal plates inside it had been mixed with the gel layer and formed a new, lighter substance.

The softness of the bulletproof vest was moderate, neither too hard, nor too soft. Its strong rebounding ability could be felt by applying just a little bit of pressure.

Compared to the previous snake scale bulletproof vest, the

properties of the current vests were amazing. There was no comparison.

“Energy Absorption Bulletproof Vest”

“Materials: Giant Archelon delivery liquid, nylon fibre, metal plates”

“Rarity: Green”

“Weight: 1kg”

“Defense: 35-39”

“Special Effect: Attack Absorption (Physical)

“Special Effect 2: Rebound (Immediate springback after any attack)

“Remarks: This is no doubt a highly protective bulletproof vest. Although its special effects may seem simple, all kinds of power will be reflected on it. It can resist any attack, from bullets to cannonballs. Its only disadvantage is that whenever it absorbs an attack, it starts heating up. Of course, compared to its strong protection, this weakness is not even worth mentioning.

To test the effects of the bulletproof vest, Luo Yuan walked to an empty area and let Huang Jiahui shoot him with dark blue level

bullets. All the bullets bounced away. Other than a slight vibration, he could feel no pain at all.

After he wiped off the black dots on the bulletproof vest, its surface became as smooth as new. The bullets had not left any marks, and its temperature had not increased much either. Obviously, that kind of attack did not affect the vest much, hence the low level of heat.

Wang Shishi's Flying Shuttle was also upgraded using the eggshells. Its level of sharpness had already exceeded Luo Yuan's zhanmadao. The rest of the eggshells had been synthesized into heavy caliber sniper bullets and normal handgun bullets. If anyone got hit by these bullets other than light green level creatures, they would be filled with holes.

After the synthesization, the whole team's attacking ability had improved in quality. As they consumed more green level food, everyone's body qualities would increase rapidly.

Chen Xianfeng didn't come back the whole morning or in the afternoon. Everybody was secretly relieved, thinking that he had left quietly. At night though, when everyone was about to go to bed, he suddenly came back limping.

It seemed like he had been fighting with some kind of creature. His whole body was bloody and gravely injured. There were several profound scars on his chest, the flesh there all twisted. The most severe injuries were on his thighs and arms. The skin and flesh there was all torn off, his white bones almost visible.

However, after venting his anger, his eyes seemed to have become calmer. They did not have that suppressed brutality in them anymore.

He did not enter the hall directly. He stopped at the doorway first. Luo Yuan was standing there, looking at him without moving.

After a while, Chen Xianfeng started feeling uncomfortable under Luo Yuan's gaze and backed off a little.

"You must be aware of your own condition. You could lose control any second. Letting you stay with us is too dangerous," Luo Yuan suddenly said. "Until you can control yourself, you will have to maintain more than twenty meters distance from everyone."

Chen Xianfeng's eyes flashed with a trace of fury. When it subsided he said, "I... I will sleep outside."

The changes in his expression had all been noted by Luo Yuan. He sighed. Chen Xianfeng's temperament had undergone a dramatic change compared to his old self. He got angry easily, and he was brutal and arrogant. He was no longer the sincere person he had used to be. Luo Yuan looked at him seriously and warned him, "It's good that you know. Don't do anything that might cause a misunderstanding, or nobody will be able save you."

"Understood," Cheng Xianfeng said, looking depressed. He could sense Luo Yuan's gaze this time, so he lowered his head slightly,

trying to hide the expression on his face.

The night went by without any incident.

The next morning, when Luo Yuan opened the door, Chen Xianfeng, who was squatting at the corner of the garden, stood up unconsciously. His hand was holding a bone that was almost two meters long. There was fresh blood and flesh on it.

It was a thighbone belonging to a mutated beast. One of its sides was extremely huge and looked like a lot a hammer. He did not have that bone during the day. Obviously, he had gone out again last night.

He still had blood on his mouth. The wounds on his body were more than the previous day, and his old wounds had almost healed. Even the blood on his torn arm and thigh was encrusted, the wounds seeming to have shrunk more than half in size. He would probably fully recover in few days' time.

His self-healing ability was shocking.

When he saw Luo Yuan, he unnaturally avoided eye contact. The hand that was holding the bone became tighter, betraying his nervousness.

Luo Yuan stared at him for a while before turning his eyes away.

Very soon, everyone got up and started to pack their luggage.

They had lots of food, weapons and cartridges. Somewhere along the way, they had also acquired three heavy sniper rifles. Other than that, everyone had each taken a handgun and a box of synthesized bullets. If Luo Yuan had not been objected, they would have taken the cannon machine gun as well.

No matter how powerful it was, the effort it would take to move it was too much. Plus, none of them knew how to operate it, and the number of bullets needed for each shot was astonishing. If they did not bring enough bullets, it would be pretty much useless. Besides, synthesized bullets were more powerful than cannon machine gun bullets. It was better if they did not bring it along.

Luo Yuan checked the luggage once again and used fish skin to wrap the food cubes. He checked the package again, going out to find some tree leaves that emitted a stimulating scent. He rubbed the tree leaves before wrapping it again. He wrapped and wrapped, until he could no longer smell that unique aroma coming out.

The giant lizard was very sensitive to this type of high-level food. He could not guarantee that its instincts would not take over again upon smelling it and directly lead to another breach of loyalty.

Luo Yuan carefully tied all the luggage on the Giant Lizard's back. The lizard moved slightly, but kept quiet. Its large crystal-clear eyes had become tame once again. He found it weird, so he opened up the properties panel. He seemed to have overestimated the Giant Lizard's grudge-bearing ability. After a quiet night, the Giant Lizard's loyalty had recovered substantially. It could not reach the peak 80 points it had once been, yet it had risen back to 78 points.

It was a lot like a kid whose candy has been snatched by their parents. Although they would scream and cry momentarily, after some time, they would completely forget about their earlier grief. The Giant Lizard's IQ was the same as a one or two year-old kid's.

However, after thinking about it for a while, Luo Yuan found himself not caring anymore. When everyone had climbed up onto the lizard's back, Luo Yuan commanded it, and the giant lizard started taking big strides forward. Behind it, a giant was trotting along, following it from a distance.

An hour later, they came across a hidden city in the forest.

Chapter 154: Supermarket

Luo Yuan already knew from the map that Jia Ping City was a submerged area. It could be said that the whole Jiangnan Province had almost no non-submerged areas. Judging by what he had seen with his own eyes, the city had obviously been submerged way earlier than he had imagined.

From the entrance of the highway to the city, the original road was no longer visible. A layer of thirty to forty centimeters of mutated moss had firmly blocked the road.

On top of the moss, were fully-grown spores about the size of strawberries. While Luo Yuan and others were passing by, those spores seemed to get scared and cracked one after the other, bursting into yellowish clouds of smoke.

Fortunately, although the moss was sticky and irritating, it was not poisonous. Otherwise, it would have been difficult to step into any part of the city.

This place had almost become a heritage of what civilization used to be. In only half a year, a great quantity of plants had taken over the city, and the few remaining buildings had been packed with numerous, closely arranged vines. These vines were like huge anacondas, coiling around the whole building and gathered at the rooftop, forming a purple ball of fifty to sixty meters in diameter. It looked majestic but gave everyone the chills.

As Luo Yuan and the others went forward, they heard the sound

of water all around them. Everywhere they passed there were innumerable, weird mutated creatures popping out from the moss and running to escape. There were some small bugs too, but they also kept their distance from them.

One had to see it with their own eyes to get a sense of the danger lurking there. In between the moss, there was almost an independent community of creatures. Luo Yuan estimated that each square was inhabited by no less than ten different species. Some of them were ferocious and colourful - clearly not harmless.

There were very few survivors. Even evolved humans would have trouble surviving there. They wouldn't even be able to go hunting without dying within a few steps of walking distance.

"I've been here before. Wu Mei Supermarket is located just down the road. Maybe we can go and have a look," Wang Xianguang suddenly said.

"This is supposed to be Tian Ping road. There is indeed a supermarket," Cao Lin said.

They all almost came to a stop.

No matter how strong their Will was, they were still human. Looking at the countless escaping creatures under their feet, they could not help but feel itchy. They dared not travel further in. Although they had not encountered any danger or strong creatures along the way, this city seemed very gloomy. It felt like it was cursed. Even Luo Yuan did not feel comfortable there.

He took a glance at the Giant Lizard and realized it did not look uneasy at all. He felt slightly relieved.

They were standing before a four-storey tall building, or, as it would be more appropriate to call it, a ten-meter tall botanical garden. Its original look had changed long ago. If Huang Xianguang had not told them so, they would never have guessed that it used to be a supermarket.

“Go and have a look,” Luo Yuan nodded. There was only one purpose for coming to the city this time, and that was to get supplies.

Since the attack from the beast on the highway, almost all their supplies had been gone. They were very close to becoming savages. They had no sleeping bags, toothpaste, or clothes to change into. The few ragged clothes they had were their only important resource. They treated them with care and used them in a variety of ways.

The previous night, when Cao Lin had gotten her period, the ragged cloths had provided a new function.

The women did not like living in such poverty. Even Luo Yuan could barely stand it anymore.

Fortunately, the clothes they were wearing were synthesized, and they could not break. Otherwise, they would have already been walking around naked like savages.

After walking more than ten meters, Luo Yuan reached a dense plant. He had estimated that that was where the doorway should be. He pulled out his sword and cleaved the thick plant. What he found behind it though was not the doorway, but a corroded wall.

Luo Yuan was too lazy to look for the real door. Instead, he just dug a small, one-meter diameter hole into the wall. He let the others wait outside and asked them to be careful as he went in.

As soon as he entered, a strong mouldy smell hit his nose, and he held his breath.

It was completely dark inside. The floor was greasy, making him feel like he was standing in mud, and his feet made squeaking noises as he walked. Through the dim light of the hole in the wall, Luo Yuan scanned the whole place once quickly.

There were no mutated beasts. Just countless shelves lying in a mess on the floor. Most of them were empty, but some of them still had some goods on them. There were also more discarded goods on the floor.

Luo Yuan noticed that there were more than ten sets of human bones on the floor. This meant that a fight must have taken place there.

He did not rush. He found a staircase and went up to the second floor.

The first floor had stored food, but the second floor stored daily use goods. Obviously, living goods did not have as much value as food. The resources there were way more than on the first floor, yet the human skeletons were more as well. There was almost one hundred of them.

Luo Yuan noticed that there were bullet-shaped holes in them. He shook his head, unable to imagine what had happened.

Jia Ping City was an unremarkable city. Its strategic location was nothing compared to Donghu City. The government's limited armed forces obviously could not afford to protect such a small city. Maybe when the mutation had started, the city had already been submerged. That's what he could tell from the state of the supermarket and the goods in it.

After Hedong City had fallen, the supermarket must have run a temporary warfare rationing system. The supermarket, as a large cargo trading platform, must have closed due to lack of supplies and been turned into a military workshop. It must have only functioned as a supermarket during the early phases of the mutation outbreak.

All these thoughts passed through his mind in just a second. Then, he found an almost broken, corroded trolley, and started putting daily use goods in it. Toothpaste, towels, shampoo, bras, panties... He just took everything he saw. Anything without a package had already rotted, and anything in metallic packaging was full of rust.

Luo Yuan wanted to find a steel pan, but no matter how hard he tried, he could not find the perfect one. In the end, he just gave up. They would continue to use the stone pan.

Very soon, the trolley was full. Luo Yuan found a second one and started filling it to the brim.

He had loaded three trolleys before he walked to third floor. He found clothes and sports equipment there. Several cotton and wool based clothes had already decomposed, but nylon and chemical fibre remained in perfect condition. Luo Yuan had no interest in choosing. He just stuffed everything that looked intact into the trolley. At the sports equipment section, he finally found a field camp tent.

Luo Yuan was over the moon.

Squeezing and sleeping together was too uncomfortable. Not only did they not have any personal space, but the exposure outside also made them extremely insecure. In his opinion, those tiny, insignificant bugs were more threatening than mutated beasts.

At least mutated beasts were large in size, and they were able to spot their movement. Tiny bugs, on the other hand, came unnoticed and made it impossible for him to stop them.

Although the sword could prevent tiny bugs from coming near, the world was big and mysterious. He wasn't confident that the sword could frighten all kinds of bugs. On the other hand, a field

camp tent could protect them from all bugs, provided that it underwent some synthesizing.

However, there weren't much leftover tents left. Luo Yuan searched some more, but he only found two.

Two tents would definitely not be enough. Especially considering one of them was for kids. Even Wang Shishi could not sleep in it. It was totally useless.

Luo Yuan noticed that there was also a fourth floor, and he walked up to it.

The metal gate on the fourth floor was closed tightly. Based on the mottled writing on it, it would be safe to say that this was a store. The door lock had been broken by others and left on the door. Luo Yuan pushed the door, but it seemed like there was something blocking it from the inside, because it would not move at all.

Luo Yuan cut the door into many pieces using his sword. He realized it was being blocked by more than ten sandbags stacked together in front of it. No wonder it could not be pushed open.

Luo Yuan patiently tossed the sandbags away one by one.

His 13-point Strength was terrifying. The one-hundred-kilogram sandbags felt like nothing in his hand. They were all effortlessly tossed more than ten meters away, producing a dull bang sound.

Suddenly, the sound of shelves falling down came from afar.

Luo Yuan stopped what he was doing and vigorously looked toward the direction the sound had come from. He saw several pairs of oily green eyes in the dark.

Chapter 155: Call For Help

Pairs of frightened, yet desperate eyes...

These was a group of lucky survivors staying there. It was not a small number either; there were even more of them hiding in that dark corner. Luo Yuan could not see clearly, and it was too dark for them to know what had come in through the doorway.

All they could do was hold their breath and be vigilant. Luo Yuan saw their teeth chattering in anxiety. The sound could be heard clearly amid the silent atmosphere. There was no need to be scared. It was so dark there, that hiding was useless.

“I'm human. Don't be panic, everyone!”

Luo Yuan's unexpected voice caused a commotion among the group. Many of them stood up as if they'd been relieved of a burden. Some even started to shout merrily.

“Don't go, you will die!”

“Shut up, don't make noise!”

Soon, there were people raising their voices and scolding. Although their tone was strict, a slight shiver could be heard in their condemning voices.

Chaos ensued when the others heard it. A few of them started to move forward, but quickly rushed back. Their faces betrayed their indescribable fear as the crowd's shivering became more intense.

Luo Yuan's heart flashed with a trace of uncertainty. They must have met rascals before. During the apocalypse, there were no rules. People like that were everywhere. To avoid any unnecessary trouble, he hurriedly said, "Please don't panic. I have no bad intentions. I'm just looking for something in the supermarket."

The crowd remained silent. Other than the sound of their breathing, shivering and the sound of their chattering teeth, nothing else could be heard.

Luo Yuan wanted to laugh, but he could not. Maybe that was how normal humans behaved during the apocalypse. They were scared and nervous, and the only thing they could was just wait to die. Without the system, he probably would not be any better either. He sighed and said straightaway, "Really, there's no need to be scared. I only need a few tents. Can I trade them for something?"

If they still did not say a word, he would just find them by himself.

The crowd continued to remain quiet, until finally there were some whispering sounds. Some of them seemed to be having a discussion before suddenly a strong flashlight flashed towards him, scanning his body a few times from top to bottom. The strong, dazzling light made Luo Yuan close his eyes slightly. Nevertheless, he still let them inspect him.

The crowd seemed relieved, and the nervous atmosphere seemed to dissolve after a while.

A man, who had to be their leader, got out of the crowd and looked at the broken door. He was scowling, but he kept his anger in check as he asked carefully, "Where do you come from? What's the situation like outside?"

Through the dim light, Luo Yuan noticed that their skin was very white, occasionally even transparent. It was obvious that they had not been in the sunlight for a very long time. However, they did not lack any kind of living resources in there. There were plenty of food supplies as well. None of them seemed to be underfed.

"I'm from Hedong City. I just happened to pass by here, looking for some resources, but everything is submerged out there, and by the time I arrived here, the area had already turned into a forest," Luo Yuan said.

A commotion rose among the crowd, but no one dared speak. Clearly, the man had a very high prestige there.

"How is that possible?" he asked in shock. "How did you get here?"

"By luck. There were a few dangerous incidents along the way that almost cost me my life." Luo Yuan knew that no matter how he explained it to them, they would not understand. He might as well just say as little as possible.

“You are really lucky. We have tents here. You don't need to trade them with anything. We don't care. Just leave as soon as you have them. We want to close the door already,” the man said coldly. Then he asked a few of his men to find the tents using their flashlights.

“Can you give me a few flashlights as well?”

“Yes, but just two, plus one box of batteries. We don't have much. Don't be greedy.” Although the man's attitude was cold, he did not decline his request. Maybe he knew Luo Yuan could not have come there alone from Hedong City.

“How long have you all been staying here?”

“More than five months. We have forgotten how long exactly,” the man said coldly.

“Don't you want to leave?” Luo Yuan asked. Staying there was equal to waiting for death. Even if they did not run out of food, it would all rot eventually, and by that time, the only option they would have left would be death.

“Leave? Are you kidding?” The man chuckled and said, “Unless you want to die, I advise you to leave Jia Ping City.”

There seemed to be a hidden meaning behind his words. Luo Yuan recalled the strange response of the group earlier, and his

heart was moved as he said, “Have you encountered any dangers before?”

Everyone’s faces changed all of a sudden.

The man’s expression flashed with a gleam of fear. He seemed to struggle as he said in a hoarse voice, “Don’t ask. You really don't want to know. Take my advice or leave it, it's up to you.”

Luo Yuan did not get angry. He was curious about why their expression had changed as soon as they had heard, and what it was that had happened they did not even want to mention.

There were resources everywhere in the store, but it didn't take them long to find the place where they stored the tents. They took about five tents and dumped them in front of Luo Yuan.

“Get what you want and get out fast.”

As soon as the man had finished his words, he led the crowd to the back of the store, where they hid themselves in total darkness.

Luo Yuan’s head was filled with questions, and his brows were wrinkled. Finally, he let out a sigh, chose four perfect tents and walked out of the fourth floor store.

He did not care about these people's warning. He been through great ordeals to get where he was now. There were no mutated creature that he had not come across. Considering his ability now,

neither dark blue level creatures nor light green level creatures could be his rival.

An extremely dangerous creature for ordinary humans was nothing for him.

However, his heart was still slightly uneasy. No matter what he did, he could not let it go.

Jia Ping City was too quiet. The creatures there seemed to be sleeping deeply. All along the way, he had not seen any even remotely strong creature, not even a sign of one. This was really strange for a submerged region.

Anyone who achieved their purpose there could leave the city straightaway. No matter how dangerous it was, they would not be affected.

Luo Yuan carried the supplies as he walked out of the plant-covered supermarket. Noticing that he was back, everybody was silently relieved. The women started checking out what Luo Yuan had brought in excitement.

As Luo Yuan looked at the hole he had made, he could not help but feel sorry. The plants on the outside of the supermarket were somehow protecting the survivors inside from some kind of danger. Now that he had made that hole, their protection would be gone. All he could do was try his best to cover it.

He turned to Chen Xianfeng, who was standing far away, and said, “There were some survivors inside. Go and move some big rocks here. Lets help them fill the hole.”

“There are humans here?” Zhao Yali said in astonishment. “Don’t they want to follow us?”

“For them, it might be more dangerous to come out,” Huo Dong said. “It's better for them to drift along, and count the days as they live each one.”

Luo Yuan’s heart was heavy. The arrival of the apocalypse had turned humans from the owners of the city into rats inside a drain. The survivors left in this ghost city were less than ten thousand.

Chen Xianfeng obeyed Luo Yuan's order and started towards the nearby area without speaking a word.

There were collapsed buildings everywhere. Although there were few big rocks, concrete mud stones were in abundance.

Soon, he was moving a one-meter diameter, five-ton concrete mud stone, pushing it forward with heavy steps. Luo Yuan could only hope to have such strength. His strength had increased to an unbelievable extent after his mutation.

He put down the concrete mud heavily, letting out a loud sigh, before he quickly blocked the hole and stood beside it indifferently.

Luo Yuan used vines to cover it. He clapped his palms and inspected it carefully. You could not tell that there was a hole there. Plus after a few days, when the plants regrow and cover the exposed area, it would all be back to its original state.

Meanwhile, Huang Jiahui and the others had carefully divided the supplies and packed them inside hiking bags to carry them.

They had learned their lesson after losing their supplies last time, so they were not going to put all their eggs in the same basket. Although that might have been easier, once a problem arose, the whole team would be condemned.

“Help, help!”

Suddenly, Luo Yuan paused and concentrated, trying to listen. From a distance they could hear the faint sound of someone calling for help. It made him feel strange.

“What’s wrong?” Huang Jiahui felt curious as she noticed Luo Yuan’s expression.

“Somebody is calling for help. It sounds like they're somewhere nearby. Don't you hear it?” Luo Yuan asked suspiciously.

Everyone looked confused as they shook their heads. Only Chen Xianfeng’s expression seemed unsure.

“Let’s go check it out,” Luo Yuan said.

Everyone took their luggage and walked towards the source of the sound.

As they turned a corner on the street, the call for help suddenly became clear. Now everyone else could hear it too.

The shouts were obviously coming from a woman. The voice was very sharp and penetrative.

They kept walking for a while.

“Wait.” Cao Lin’s face changed as she asked, “How long has she been shouting?”

“We’ve been walking for more than a minute,” Lin Xiaoji said as he counted. His face looked worried.

Luo Yuan realized that too. This shout for help was too weird. Normal humans could not keep screaming while calling for help. Plus, the voice sounded forced. In such a dangerous situation, screaming out loud like this would attract more mutated beasts and speed up her death. It would serve no purpose. And yet, this woman was still alive and had the energy to shout loudly.

In their opinion, this call for help sounded very robotic. Each time was like a repeat of the previous one. There were no changes in intonation, and there was none of the fear or desperation

normal people felt when facing danger.

A chilling feeling rose from the bottom of their hearts. Even Luo Yuan's heart felt it.

Wang Shishi unconsciously pulled at Luo Yuan's shirt. Normally she was the one who was afraid of this kind of thing the most. Regardless of how strong she was, it still did not cure her fear of ghosts.

From a psychological perspective, aggressive beasts could never be as scary as ghosts. Realistic creatures could be destroyed, but the fear of fantastic beasts could never be conquered. It was the unknown that made people the most afraid.

"Why don't we go back?" Cao Lin asked carefully as she flinched.

"Let's go and have a look first. I want to know what is playing this trick." Luo Yuan's face was very serious. Whatever that thing was, if it dared draw them in, then it had to be prepared to pay the consequences.

"Damn, it can't be a female ghost, can it?" Huo Dong joked with a very stiff expression. The call for help was getting clearer, as if that thing was walking towards them.

"Do you want to die?" Wang Shishi said in hatred as she stared at him.

“Where on earth are there ghosts? It must be a mutated creature,” Luo Yuan said steadily.

To some degree, Luo Yuan had become everyone’s pillar. Looking at him and his calm expression, everyone automatically felt more courageous. Although they were still nervous, their expressions had changed for the better.

Chapter 156: The Wicked Woman

The strange call for help sounded kind of ethereal on the empty street. The dead silence gave everyone goosebumps.

This was definitely not a victim.

As the sound got closer, the group turned another corner, and suddenly found a woman standing alone in the middle of the moss-filled street.

The woman or creature was standing lively in the middle of the road, completely naked. She had snowy white, soft skin, a perfect figure, straight long thighs, and very long hair. Her black smooth hair hang all the way down to her plump ass, somehow not matching the extreme circumstances of the apocalypse.

If not for her hands, they would have mistaken her for a real human, a beautiful woman who could make one's blood boil.

However, from a short distance of thirty meters, everyone could clearly see her overly long fingernails. They were about five or six centimeters long. The nails of normal humans would start to bend and roll up when they exceeded one centimeter. However, the woman's nails were strangely straight and sharp, just like daggers.

As they got closer to her, she seemed to sense something, and her call for help stopped abruptly. Her head twisted slightly without a warning, and she suddenly turned and looked in their direction.

There was a wicked, yet drowsy smile on her face as her eyes looked over at them slow-wittedly. They did not seem capable of emotional changes. They looked just like a puppet's eyes.

The abnormal phenomenon had everyone watching it trembling. Zhao Yali, who had always been timid, suddenly paled. Her body started shaking and she almost fell to the ground.

Huang Jiahui held the gun in her hand tighter.

The Giant Lizard, on the other hand, looked very calm. It wasn't moving at all. Maybe it just wasn't used to seeing things like that.

The woman looked straight at them for quite a while, but did not do anything. It looked like she was considering something. That smile on her face still hung there wickedly.

After they'd been confronting each for a few seconds, something strange happened. The woman suddenly raised her head, opened her mouth and screamed without making a sound. At first, Luo Yuan thought it was some kind of sonic wave attack, but other than everyone feeling a suppression on their chests, there was nothing unusual about it.

Luo Yuan felt a little off, like something invisible and dangerous was approaching.

He believed in his own instincts though, so he made a fast

decision and shouted at Huang Jiahui, “Fire!”

Huang Jiahui hesitated shortly before she pulled the trigger. A well-trained gunner like her could not miss from such a short distance. The bullet shot through the woman’s skull, leaving a bloody hole on her head.

Everyone held their breath.

No matter what creature this was, as long as it was vertebrate, its skull was its killing point. Once that was destroyed, it had almost no chance of survival. However, the woman seemed to be unaware of the gunshot as she continued to shout soundlessly. Huang Jiahui’s face turned pale as she watched her. She kept pulling the trigger.

The woman’s head already looked like a beehive. Sometimes it was not a good thing if the penetration of the bullet that was too strong. If Huang Jiahui had been using a normal, large bullet, just one shot would have been enough to blow the creature’s head off. However, synthesized bullets could only leave two parallel holes. By the time Huang Jiahui was out of bullets, the woman’s head still stood right there. There were just a few small holes in it.

Brain matter mixed with blood slowly flowed out of the holes. At last, the creature could not stand anymore. Her body shook as if she was drunk, and she turned around on the spot, her mouth opening and closing, the soundless sonic wave going on and off.

Suddenly, she fell to the ground, her limbs still struggling

nonstop. She kept standing up and falling down again.

Her strong vitality shocked everyone.

Out of the blue, the Giant Lizard suddenly snorted and raised its head.

Luo Yuan noticed the Giant Lizard's unease. His heart turned cold with an obscure instinct as he hurriedly said, "This is not normal. We have to leave this place right now."

"What's wrong?" Wang Shishi asked curiously. She did not seem to understand.

"It's too dangerous here. Fast, grab all the luggage. I will explain later!"

The Giant Lizard started to get irritated and kept stomping its four limbs anxiously. Anyone would be able to sense the danger getting closer.

Luo Yuan ordered the lizard to lie down, but the beast was in a state of rage and would not listen to him. The scales all over its body had rolled up into a serrated shape, its huge, long tail swaying nonstop in the sky. Its wrinkled lips revealed its dreadfully messy teeth while the lizard growled with a thunder-like sound.

Lao Huang, who was neither friendly nor aloof to the team, was also trotting along behind them. It had red fur filled with some

kind of transparent, light red flame. The moss on the road turned into smoked char after being stepped on by it. It stopped more than one hundred meters from the Giant Lizard. It kept an eye on the beast while it looked at Zhao Yali and turned its head in concentration to stare in the distance.

Looking at Lao Huang's horrifying behaviour, Zhao Yali, who had been excited and ready to shout, turned pale and shut her mouth.

The two beasts seemed ready for a fight, yet they were not each other's opponent.

The suppressed atmosphere diffused among the team. Everyone's heart felt like it was being pressed by a huge rock. Nobody spoke anymore. Even Luo Yuan could feel the strong pressure.

From a distance, they heard bright voices. A few seconds later, there was a sound like a dull thunder rolling in the sky. The sound moved towards them like waves in the sea. It felt like there were countless creatures running towards them from every direction.

"Current Mission: B Level Mission, Escape to the sky, Mission Goal: Save at least four people."

A system message suddenly appeared in his mind. Luo Yuan was finally presented with a big chance. A chilling feeling rose from the bottom of his heart and spread all over his body.

He was not just worried about the B Level Mission. If it was any normal mission, Luo Yuan would not have been this nervous. Considering his abilities now though, he could not complete a B Level Mission.

What was making him more nervous though, was that this kind of mission set survival as a goal. It did not look easy. In fact, it was the hardest kind of mission, and the most dangerous and uncertain mission difficulty level. Plus, he could reject normal missions. Even if he rejected this mission though, they would still not be able to escape.

He had only experienced this kind of situation once, during the beast attack on the highway. That mission had been almost ninety percent gone. It would have taken only one mistake for the whole group to be wiped out. If he had not discovered his evolving ability by accident, he would have died right then and there.

The only fortunate thing compared to that incident on the highway, was that his level had been upgraded in the meantime, and his abilities had changed drastically. Not just his, but the Giant Lizard's as well. Lao Huang's ability had also reached a dark blue level and Chen Xianfeng could definitely withstand a fight, so maybe this time would not be like the last.

Luo Yuan felt relieved at the thought.

“Don't stand at the crossroads. Move to the street in front,” he told everyone as he observed the terrain.

The crossroads was accessible from all directions. It provided them with a wide field of vision, but at the same time it also ran the risk of getting attacked from all directions. When it came to beast attacks, the less chance there was to get into a fight, the safer it would be for them.

Soon, everyone had occupied the intersection of the road. There were tall buildings on both sides of the street. Although some were collapsed, the lower floors all remained intact. Luo Yuan cleaved the plants on the exterior of a building and broke a man-sized hole into it for emergency purposes. Just in case they encountered some kind of danger and needed a place to hide.

The building had been corroded severely and could not withstand more than a few hits. Once it fell down, there would be no way to escape. Otherwise, Luo Yuan would have just hidden inside it.

A box of bullets was thrown on the ground. Lin Xiaoji and Huo Dong put down their rifle guns and blocked the street. Wang Xianguang was also holding a handgun and aiming with perfect posture. Her performance was very steady. She was even better than the rest.

Zhao Yali had wanted to hide, but when she saw the other women all raising their guns, she hesitated and took out a gun as well. Her hands kept trembling, and she forgot to pull the safety. Her performance was the polar opposite of Wang Xianguang's.

Luo Yuan sighed. He knew Wang Xianguang looked soft on the outside, but her personality was very strong, and she was extremely loyal. Once she had decided to do something, even bulls

could not hold her back. Her independent personality and overall toughness made people think that she did depend on others. From this perspective, she was not like Zhao Yali at all.

Luo Yuan did not have a lot of feelings for Wang Xianguang, but he liked Zhao Yali. Men always liked soft, loveable women. Zhao Yali's soft personality always made him feel more masculine.

Luo Yuan's mind flashed, his consciousness highly keyed up. He looked at Chen Xianfeng seriously and said, "You stand outside and block the beasts."

Chen Xianfeng growled in agitation. Huo Dong, who was standing beside him, got scared and backed off a few steps. Only when he realized Chen Xianfeng had just screamed and made no further motion, did he move back to his original position.

Luo Yuan noted that he had not said no, but he had not said anything else either. He turned and faced Wang Shishi. "Shishi, you have the strongest ability here. I want you to stay behind. Don't take any action yet, just protect everyone else."

Looking at Luo Yuan's dignified gaze, Wang Shishi finally felt Brother Luo pay some attention to her again. She nodded heavily, a serious expression forming on her tiny face.

Suddenly, the motion from afar became louder, and the ground started to shake slightly. The Giant Lizard and Lao Huang slowly stepped back, moving towards the noise. As the two of them got close to each other, the Giant Lizard growled deeply in warning.

However, Lao Huang's attention was diverted. It did not seem to care as much.

A few seconds later, several creatures started to appear sporadically.

It was really strange. Instead of mutated creatures, most of the creatures were human, and all of them were naked. Male, female, old and young. There was even a three year-old kid. Everyone's facial expression was the same. That ever unchanging drowsy smile and blank gaze making their heads almost burst.

"What's going on? Why are they all like that?" Zhao Yali said as she shivered. Her body was shaking like a sieve. The gun in her hand fell to the ground, the scene before her eyes almost causing her a mental breakdown.

This wasn't just one or two people, but ten; plus, there were a lot old people and children among them. They were no longer human. Their actions were as swift and brisk as some agile mutated beast's. They did not differ much from one.

The people walking at the front stopped suddenly, not moving at all. Those at the back followed them and stopped as well.

Luo Yuan's face changed. An idea suddenly flashed through his mind and he made a signal at Huo Dong.

Huo Dong nodded nervously. He raised the rifle, aimed at one of

them and pulled the trigger with force.

The rifle produced a loud noise, much like a raging thunder in the sky, and its strong recoiling power paralyzed Huo Dong's arm. The bullet cut a man into half, but that was not the end of it. It kept moving, separating five men's upper bodies from their lower bodies as they stood in a row. It only stopped when it finally drilled into a building.

Luo Yuan was impressed by the rifle's power, but this was not the time to think about it.

He noticed that after the shot, the group only remained in chaos for a short moment before everything returned to normal. The people who had been hit by the bullet were still struggling in the middle of the street. A woman who had lost her lower body was using her every last bit of strength to turn herself around and sit on the ground. She still had that drowsy smile on her face even though she was bleeding and her organs were all over the road.

It felt like the street had been muted. No howls of pain, no attacks, not even a single reaction. The people who had been hit by the bullet were still trying to stand up, but they looked like they were dead.

There were more and more humans and mutants heading their way. The crossroads had been blocked and there was nothing to do about it. The humans and mutants seemed to be controlled by an invisible force.

There were few powerful mutants among them. Except for the humans, all the remaining creatures were no taller than five or six meters. The longest one was a gorgeous twenty-meter long colourful, snake-like creature no higher than a dark blue level.

How did Luo Yuan feel about this?

He thought it was no wonder that the city was so peaceful. There was no strong, powerful creature there. After all, these creatures were not living things. They were just puppets.

“There are mutants behind us, too. We’ve been surrounded,” said Cao Lin suddenly in a taut, high-pitched voice.

Luo Yuan turned around and took a look. Before they had realized it, the several-hundred-meter long street had been filled with countless mutants.

“We have to go. The longer we stay, the more danger we’ll be in. We must break through,” said Luo Yuan with a dignified expression.

Chapter 157: Trust

Huo Dong and Chen Xianfeng held their rifles in their hands frantically.

Everyone else looked scared too. They had no way to calm down. In this situation, anyone who was not having a mental breakdown would be considered brave.

Luo Yuan glanced at the direction of beasts, who maintained their lineup, ready for an attack. He took a deep breath, pulled out his zhanmadao and said, “Everyone just follow me. Whether we live or we die will depend on fate. If you wanna stay alive, follow me closely.”

Then Luo Yuan shouted at the Giant Lizard. The beast was still in a violent, agitated mood, and acted as if it hadn’t heard Luo Yuan.

Luo Yuan did not care so much. He could only rely on it, hoping it would follow him later.

Next, he drilled a hole into the nearby building. It was completely dark inside. Luo Yuan turned on his flashlight and tossed another one to Huang Jiahui, telling her softly, “Be careful.”

Huang Jiahui nodded in determination.

There were cracks everywhere on the walls inside, and many

parts had already collapsed. The building looked like it could not even survive a tremor.

Of course Luo Yuan did not plan on hiding in there. He quickly went to the wall on the opposite side, and started cutting another hole. When sunlight fell through the hole to the place where they stood, the crowd could not help but inhale in fear.

The street out there was still packed with a great number of beasts.

Everybody got so scared, they backed off.

“Everywhere. They’re everywhere. We should not have come here,” Lin Xiaoji said exasperatedly. The rifle in his hand could not stop shaking. “This time we’re doomed.”

“Don’t give me that s*it right now. Just kill yourself if you’re scared,” Huo Dong scolded him irritatedly.

“Who’s afraid to die? I survived when I was living all by myself. You’re the one who keeps eating without working!” Lin Xiaoji shouted stubbornly.

“When did I eat without working? Chen Xianfeng and I do all the hard work. Don’t think that just because you’ve evolved, you’re any better than us. I’ve disliked you right from the beginning.” Under such intense pressure, Huo Dong had also started shouting, scolding Lin Xiaoji with a red face and hoarse throat.

Chen Xianfeng growled unpleasantly as he stared at Lin Xiaoji fiercely.

Huang Jiahui had suggested that they look for resources in the city, and everyone else had agreed. As Lin Xiaoji mentioned this, Huang Jiahui could not help but blush.

“Everyone shut up.” Luo Yuan had noticed what was happening. He intentionally looked at Lin Xiaoji and chided him coldly, “What are you making so much noise for? If you don’t want to stay here, then leave. We don’t need you.”

Lin Xiaoji’s whole body shivered as if a bucket of cold water had been poured down his head. His face was turned white as he said, “I... I did not mean, I...”

Luo Yuan knew that Lin Xiaoji was mentally exhausted and he had not meant to say that. However, this behavior had to be stubbed out before it got worse. After all, no decision could be implemented without his agreement. Acting at will all the time could cause group dispersion.

“Everyone check your own weapons. We will kill our way out. I don’t believe that every street is occupied,” Luo Yuan briefed them while he looked at the entrance of the hole. The beasts had not moved at all. It was good timing.

He moved like an ape, going through the entrance of the hole. Then he swung his Zhanmadao and a feline mutated beast was cut

into two.

His speed was very fast, and his sword gleamed like lightning, blood sputtering all around. Broken limbs and flesh could be seen everywhere.

“Hurry, hurry! Follow me!” Huang Jiahui shouted.

The thick moss was covered with fresh, dense blood. Walking on it felt like walking on mud. It emitted a very strong smell.

Zhao Yali's gastric acid surged in her stomach while she ran in panic behind Wang Shishi. The scenarios running through her mind made her have one hell of a hallucination. Suddenly, she felt something soft under her feet. She looked carefully and gasped in shock. It was a part of a large intestine still steaming hot gas.

She got so scared, her face turned pale and she quickly stepped back. She was out of control, and her ankle tightened as a palm tightly grabbed her calf. It was an arm that had fallen off a body. Obviously, it had not gone completely stiff yet. That's why when something had gone near it, it'd had the reflex reaction to hold it.

Zhao Yali could no longer suppress the screams in her throat. She kept kicking hysterically, but she still could not get rid of the palm, which was holding her ankle tightly.

Hearing her, Luo Yuan turned back to see what was going on. “Wang Shishi, go help her,” he said.

Wang Shishi responded reluctantly. Zhao Yali was her love rival after all. Although she did not wish her dead, watching her act like a fool was something Wang Shishi was enjoying. However, she dared not disobey Luo Yuan's orders. Immediately, she threw the shuttle over the top of the head and stabbed the arm in a rush.

The vibration of the shuttle turned the blood and flesh both into mist. It took as long as a breath for the whole arm to disappear.

Zhao Yali screamed out in shock again. Blood was stained all over her head and face, making her look pitiful.

Wang Shishi sneered silently. She had done it on purpose.

At this critical moment, an accident suddenly occurred. The beasts seemed to receive a certain signal. The puppets that had originally been standing still suddenly started moving.

Both sides of mutated beasts gushed towards them like turbulent waves.

Luo Yuan's face changed. In the blink of an eye, he had cut several mutated beasts into two. He turned back and shouted, "Shishi, beware of getting surrounded. Everyone else quickly follow me!"

Before he had finished his speech, he was already rushing towards the frontline of the beasts with his sword. A ray flashed,

and blood spurted towards the sky. Considering his abilities, this kind of weak mutated beasts were no danger to him. In his eyes, this wasn't all that different from chopping piles of wood. This time though, the beast attack was too much. They were almost like a crowd. He was able to cut three or four mutated beasts. As he moved five steps forward, about fifty mutated beasts died from his hand.

When quantity surpassed quality, even ants could kill an elephant by biting it. If the battle site had been more spacious and someone had been commanding the mutated beasts, they could have surrounded them. In that case, unless Luo Yuan could fly, he would have most certainly died.

Humans are not machines that are made to move forever. Their energy could get depleted, their endurance could be drained and their Will be broken. Regardless of how strong one was, facing a legion of enemies that moved like the ocean tide was a waste of their strength.

On the other hand, Wang Shishi had also started to attack. Her green level flying shuttle moved rapidly back and forth like a loom in the sky, forming a sonic boom. Sometimes, before the flying shuttle could even get close to them, the heads on the other side would explode like bombs under the pressure of the sonic boom.

The beasts had completely stopped fighting the attack. The area in a circumference of five meters had become a vacuum of beasts.

Since the terrifying experience at the sea river that had revealed her telekinesis, Wang Shishi's ability had gotten stronger.

Although she had not officially reached a level where she could fly, she was still better by leaps and bounds compared to the past. Plus, if one were to compare combat skills, her overpowering, combo telekinesis attack was way stronger than Luo Yuan's.

Of course, the only weakness of telekinesis was its low consistency. It could only be used for a few minutes at the most.

For now though, that would be sufficient enough.

The street was barely over twenty meters, so Luo Yuan only had to walk for about three minutes. His whole body was soaked in blood. Even his waterproof, oily shirt was covered in sticky, fresh blood.

He had once again broken in through the front of the building. Everyone went in with him. They had not even gotten to rest for a few seconds when the wall was broken down by the beasts. It collapsed right away, but luckily, Luo Yuan's eyes and actions were fast. He tossed the few people standing near the wall far away. However, Chen Xianfeng had dodged too late and gotten crushed.

Chen Xianfeng had already gone crazy after being stimulated by fresh blood, and now he had gotten pounded by a collapsing wall as well. He could not hold back anymore. Using both hands, he caught a middle-aged man who had come in first, and forcefully tore him into two. Then he simply grabbed another one and used them like a wooden stick, smashing at the beasts nonstop.

Chen Xianfeng still seemed unsatisfied. He howled angrily while

he crumbled skulls with his bare hands. His big palms grabbed another human and kept swinging without getting tired.

Everyone had seen a lot of blood, but they were still not prepared for Chen Xianfeng's beast-like attack.

Luo Yuan saw the beasts and thought they could not come within such a short period of time. He bit on his lip and said, "We will proceed."

Luo Yuan was full of regret. He was regretting leaving the cannons behind to make their load lighter. If they had the two cannons now, plus an adequate numbers of bullets, no matter how many beasts there were, they could still have blocked them easily. There was no use being regretful now, though.

"It looks like there used to be a basement here," Wang Xianguang said suddenly. "There is a minus floor number on the lift."

Luo Yuan immediately felt energized as he walked over in a hurry. The entrance of the lift was twisted and full of rusty spots. Obviously, it could not be used anymore.

"The safety exit is here." Huo Dong had found the staircase.

The middle of the staircase was already broken, but they were on the ground floor, so they only needed to jump down one or two meters. Even Zhao Yali did not hesitate in jumping. The basement was full of water and covered in yellow and green fungi of all sizes.

They were not just on the ground, the fungi grew on the walls, too. Inside the basement, there was a weird, stinky fish smell.

Luo Yuan secretly identified the fungi and realized there were a lot of poisonous ones among them. There were even some toxic ones. He had no idea whether the air was poisoned or not, though. He could only leave that up to fate. However, he noticed the presence of bugs and tiny creatures. Although most of them were poisonous, at least they made him feel more optimistic.

This had to be the hotel shop. Luo Yuan kicked a decaying door, and discovered that the racks inside were full of hotel goods.

He swept the goods on the racks aside, and dragged the racks out and put them under the staircase. Of course, this would not block the beasts' attack, but it would effectively slowed them down if they tried to burst in. It was better than nothing.

Everyone helped hurriedly, moving all the racks to pile them up against the staircase fast.

Suddenly, Chen Xianfeng gasped and jumped down. His body was already full of scars, and the flesh on his chest was almost torn out. He looked close to dying as he panted for breath, his eyes all red.

“You guys do not trust me... You all... want me to die,” he growled angrily. He scanned everyone with his brutal gaze. After quite a while, he found a dark corner and sat down.

Everyone had gotten completely quiet.

Chapter 158: Horrible Creatures

Chen Xianfeng's anger and accusations were totally understandable. Everyone, including Luo Yuan, had been intentionally neglecting his safety in that particular situation by letting him continue to block the mutants. They didn't even let him know when the group had retreated, because everyone had been subconsciously wanting to kick him off the team.

It was human nature for people to want to avoid the bad and stick with the good. Even Luo Yuan was vigilant around Chen Xianfeng.

After all, he was not alone. There were people that he wanted to protect, and companions who he trusted. In fact, it was kind of irresponsible for him to allow such a dangerous person to stay with them. The reason he had allowed Chen Xianfeng to stay on the team was hardly his humanity or the casual friendship that they had built in the past few months. He still did not acknowledge him as a companion.

"We thought you'd leave in time. We've talked about it very loudly before, we thought that you'd been listening," Cao Lin said awkwardly.

Since Chen Xianfeng had mutated, his temperament had changed. His IQ had not decreased, though. In fact, it had increased, so it was pretty hard to fool him.

"Don't lie to me... You all did that intentionally. You know I can't

hear anything when I'm at that mad state." Chen Xianfeng suddenly stood up and glared at Cao Lin, baring his fangs.

He was about three meters tall, and looked like a thick wall. He could scare everyone, especially when he looked as grim as now. Cao Lin could not help but turn pale. She took a few steps backwards and fell down on the floor. Everybody else was on alert too.

"Sit down!" Luo Yuan warned him when he realized that Chen Xianfeng was about to go mad again.

Chen Xianfeng did not move. He was staring at Luo Yuan fiercely, looking even more ferocious.

Luo Yuan pulled out his Zhanmadao, and said calmly, "I said, sit down!"

His voice was not particularly loud or calm, but it had an indefinite power. No one doubted there would be consequences if they disobeyed him.

Everyone held their breath, watching all this nervously. They could not stand it. They somehow had been expecting something else.

Luo Yuan stared at Chen Xianfeng, intending to kill him, Chen Xianfeng was terrified. No matter how arrogant he was, the fact Luo Yuan was invincible still deeply impressed him.

Chen Xianfeng body muscles were getting tighter. His fists rattled, and his sharp nails pierced his skin, making him bleed. After a long while, he finally lowered his head and hid his hatred, stepping back and sitting down again.

"If you recall, I told you before that if you were not in control of yourself, you would need to leave. You should be clear about the situation just now. If we called you here, these would be the only two possibilities. Either you would be your normal self and everyone would be safe, or you would be out of control, and you know what would happen then. I would not let you live in that case," Luo Yuan explained calmly, trying to alter the accusations made by Chen Xianfeng.

He did not want to kill him, but he also could not let him maintain that feeling of hatred. Not if he wanted to avoid any unnecessary problems.

Chen Xianfeng heard him and shivered. He knew perfectly well that if he went mad, Luo Yuan would definitely kill him. Now he understood why no one had tried to remind him to retreat. His feelings of rage dissipated considerably after his reflection.

After a while, they heard a noise from outside. A bunch of mutated beasts were trying to come in.

Luo Yuan stood up holding his sword, and walked to the door.

The mutated beasts jumped from the staircase, but were blocked

by the racks, stacking up behind them like a mountain.

Huo Dong, who had followed Luo Yuan, aimed at the mutated beasts and shot. Blood blasted everywhere as everyone else started to shoot as well.

Luo Yuan frowned. If they continued shooting this way, they would run out of bullets. Plus, it was a waste to use synthetic bullets to attack such low-level mutated beasts.

"Save your bullets from now on," he said quickly. "Don't shoot, use a knife."

Most of the mutated beasts were of a white level. Only a few of them were from a light blue or blue level. On top of that, there were too many shelves constraining their movement. Based on their physical condition, it was not difficult to attack them with a knife.

However, everyone looked worried when Luo Yuan commanded them not to use their guns. Attacking with a gun from a distance was completely different than fighting close with a knife.

"You have nothing to be afraid of. These low-level mutated beasts can't even break the defense of your synthetic clothes. It's easy to kill them as long as you are extra careful and protect your heads. And don't worry, I'm also here to help if anything happens."

Huo Dong knew that once Luo Yuan had made a decision, he

would not change his mind. Thus, he was the first one to support his idea in an effort to impress him. "Yes! Finally, my knife is going to taste some blood!"

A few people chuckled, and it helped relieve the tension a bit. However, after a few seconds, everyone tensed up again.

Cao Lin took out her knife when she saw everyone holding theirs, but quietly stepped back a little.

When they had left Hedong City, Luo Yuan had collected a bunch of sharp weapons, and everyone had gotten one except for Zhao Yali.

"Shishi, you don't have to do that." Luo Yuan saw Wang Shishi taking her knife out and tried to stop her. "You just keep an eye on our surroundings and get some rest."

She had been trying to train to be braver, but she was exhausted after several attacks with her telekinesis. She really needed some time to rest.

Wang Shishi felt relieved as she put her knife back into its sheath.

Suddenly, a man who was being held back suddenly broke through the shelf barriers. He was very fast. In just a few seconds, he had already reached the front of the group. Huo Dong, who was standing there, was not prepared and got hit pretty hard.

Everyone was in shock. A few of the women even screamed, but it was to no avail. The next second, the man opened his mouth, which was full of sharp teeth, and tried to bite Huo Dong's throat.

Just as Huo Dong' mind went blank and he started to feel hopeless, he heard the sound of bones breaking, and felt blood splattering on his face. The mutated man's head had been broken by a strong hand.

Huo Dong's heart was beating very fast, and his face looked pale. When he got over the initial shock, he realized it was Chen Xianfeng who had saved his life.

Everyone was surprised. After saving his life, Chen Xianfeng had gone back and sat in the corner quietly without looking at Huo Dong.

Luo Yuan put down his knife. Suddenly, he noticed that there was something sneaking out of the brain of the mutated man and scrambling away at a fast speed.

It was a 10-centimeter white worm that looked like a centipede. Both sides of its body were covered by fine legs.

Luo Yuan quickly remembered what it was.

“I see. No wonder all these mutated beasts and men look numb. They were all being controlled by this worm.”

Luo Yuan had seen it before. It was the tentacle crypt worm. It was not a strong creature, but it specialized in living parasitically in other creatures' brains and controlling the hosts through their central nervous system.

When he realized that the worm was trying to escape, he quickly ran forward and stepped on it to kill it.

Suddenly, something strange happened. All the mutated beasts grew restless, and turned around and aimed at Luo Yuan. They moved at a faster speed until Luo Yuan could feel countless mutated beasts heading towards him.

Luo Yuan realized something in shock. The tentacle crypt worms were not working individually. They were linked with each other like a big network. Each tentacle crypt worm was a link, and together they formed an invisible, yet strong chain.

They were indeed horrible creatures. Amid the current competitive environment, they tended to grow as a group of high intelligence creatures by giving up independent life. They were intelligent enough to protect themselves, and it would be extremely destructive to the world if they were to reproduce on a larger scale.

Chapter 159: Critical

Luo Yuan looked a bit uneasy.

The most special characteristic of creatures who lived in a group was their intelligence and ability to build a community.

This was not unusual in nature. For example, ants were able to organize their marching route, build a complex nest, launch large-scale raids, and execute other amazing actions.

In fact, ants were not particularly intelligent. They were low-level creatures, just like all other insects. However, a large number of ants together could often accomplish incredible things.

They did not need a commander to order the soldier ants, and there was no boss to monitor the workers. The queen ant was only responsible for reproducing. Even if there were 60,000 ants in the colony, they did not need to be managed to carry out everyday operations. What they relied on, was the numerous interactions between individuals. They just followed simple rules to form a unique, amazing collective intelligence.

Tiny creatures such as ants were not dangerous to humans. However, when it came to a parasite, and especially a parasitic worm that had mutated, a whole group of them could produce a powerful attack if they were to fight other creatures using their close connection with each other.

There were a lot of bumping noises coming from the staircase.

The shelves had started to distort, and the mutated beasts had begun to cross over the shelves and rush towards them.

Everyone was worried, and they subconsciously stepped back a little.

Without any obstruction, the mutated beasts could now move forward fast and easy. The mutated human beasts were agiler than normal humans. They could cross the 7-8 meter long passage in just a few seconds.

No one would have expected that Wang Xianguang would be the first one to attack. She shouted softly and instantly moved forward, holding the knife in both her hands. She aimed at one of the mutated beasts and chopped it without hesitation. In the past, she had used to practice kendo, and the martial art foundations still remained, although it had been a long time since she had last practised.

In a flash, the head of the mutated beast was split into two, and blood splashed onto her face, somehow making her look both strange and beautiful.

Everyone had an excellent quality knife in their hands. Although they were not as good as Luo Yuan's, the knives were all blue level weapons, so it was not difficult for them to deal with white level mutated beasts.

Wang Xianguang was tense, but she did not feel uncomfortable. On the contrary, the bloody scene in front of her made her kind of

excited. She cautiously stepped back and aimed before she cut in half another mutated beast that had sneaked up on her from behind.

Everyone felt motivated by Wang Xianguang's performance. They had never expected those horrible mutated beasts to be so useless and easy to kill. Wang Xianguang was the weakest among them, after all.

"We've got nothing to fear! Let's do this together!" Huang Jiahui shouted loudly and started towards the mutated beasts with her knife.

Everyone, including the timid Cao Lin, followed with their knives in hand.

Only Luo Yuan, Wang Shishi, Zhao Yali and Chen Xianfeng, who were all badly injured, stood aside.

Zhao Yali felt awkward and uncomfortable as she hid in the back while everyone else fought in front. She could feel Wang Shishi's contempt without even looking at her.

"Well," Wang Shishi gave Zhao Yali a contemptuous snort as she stared at her.

Zhao Yali's face instantly flushed. She felt ashamed. She wanted the ground to open up and swallow her.

The number of mutated beasts was getting bigger. There had only been a few initially, but in less than half a minute the whole passageway had been entirely occupied by them.

However, the passage was only two meters wide, so it could not fit all the mutated beasts. Besides, there were more and more carcasses on the ground, making it increasingly difficult for the beasts to move forward.

While everyone was fighting intensely, Luo Yuan closed his eyes.

He could feel the chaos growing outside as he heard Lao Huang and the giant lizard's depressing roars from time to time. Apparently, they were having an intense battle. This time, it was not a normal mutation. The beasts had a certain order and group wisdom. Plus, they were low-level parasites. The giant lizard might not be able to last for long if they attacked it continuously.

All along the way, it was the lizard's deterrence that had helped the group avoid getting attacked. The lizard's strength was a powerful weapon. It would be a big waste if he had to give it up. However, there were too many mutated beasts outside. There was no chance of survival for him if he rushed out to help. Unless he could enter into the frequency of the Earth Stomp again.

It had been a coincidence when he had entered into the same frequency as the Earth during the last battle. He could never do it again. That had been a special case. His internal organs and sternum had all been broken, his heart had almost stopped beating, and he had almost died.

In other words, he would have been dead if he had not managed to connect with the Earth. Since then, Luo Yuan had been speculating that the phenomenon might be related to the heartbeat. A human could only enter into the Earth frequency when their heartbeat reached a certain low rate, such as five or six beats a minute.

One's heartbeat was never stable. The main function of the heart was to supply blood and deliver nutrients to the whole body. The greater the energy consumption, the faster the heartbeat. The slower and calmer the body was, the slower the heartbeat would become as well.

If he could slow down his breathing and keep it that way, he might be able to slow down his heartbeat.

That would not be enough, though. He tried very hard to think of another helpful strategy. He realized death might be an important factor, but he could not go looking for death. It was too risky.

Then he thought of his Will. Undoubtedly, determination was a mysterious force. He had known right from the beginning that Will was not just used to control external parameters. It could be used freely to control the human body as well. Every time he increased his Will, his Strength was easier to control. Now he was able to control every single one of his muscles. Whenever he was injured, he was able to close the wound and stop the bleeding.

He could do all this naturally.

“What would happen if I were to concentrate all my Will?”

Luo Yuan’s heart pumped faster at the thought. He had never tried that before.

He began to meditate, and his Will was concentrated instantly.

This time though, there was nothing abnormal about it. There was no flash or light appearing around him. It was as if nothing had happened, except for the dense mist surrounding him.

In just a moment, his emotions fluctuated and his concentrated Will suddenly collapsed.

He was shocked and amazed. It was an unprecedented, bizarre experience. He had never felt the real presence of his flesh. He seemed to be in control of everything inside his body.

He breathed deeply, and tried to calm down and gather his Will again.

He could feel the dense network of fibers in his muscles, the hardness and density of his bones, his blood flowing like a river, and his internal organs moving. Last but not least, he could feel his heart pumping hard.

He could not see it, but he could outline every single inch of his

body in his mind.

He felt it for a while, but he did not dare waste any more time. The situation was already very critical outside. The giant lizard was roaring fiercely again and again. This had to be its last defense against the mutated beasts.

He quickly switched his attention toward his heart. He could not explain why, but he had a feeling that he could control it.

The idea flashed through his mind as he felt his heartbeat get slower. It was a whole process. It felt like when someone was trying to stop a big, fast-moving object using a small force. He felt kind of helpless.

He was happy with the result, though.

He tried to control his emotions so that his Will would not collapse again as his heartbeat got lower and lower.

After a few minutes, he started to lose his Strength and his face turned pale.

The situation had become more critical. There were several dangerous fights taking place at the same time, and Wang Shishi was too busy watching her surroundings. Zhao Yali was the only one who noticed that Luo Yuan had almost fainted and quickly ran towards him to hold him up.

"Luo Yuan, are you alright? Please, you're scaring me!" Zhao Yali said in a tearful voice, her face looking worried.

Luo Yuan signed to indicate that he was fine. His heartbeat had already been reduced to ten times per minute. He was experiencing a serious shortage of blood transmission, and his overall abilities had hit rock bottom. However, he was still able to hold on for a short period of time thanks to his physical fitness.

The mutated creatures kept coming at them, and the number of carcasses on the floor kept rising. The space where they could fight was limited, and everyone had been forced to move back.

The ceiling started to fall, some parts beginning to collapse. The roof and the wall on both sides were cracking. The building itself had already been seriously corroded, and the attack from the mutated beasts had only accelerated the destruction process.

It could not last any longer.

Everyone had been injured lightly. Their clothes were tough enough to protect them from an attack by low-level mutated beasts.

Still, they were all exhausted.

They had just been learning to fight, so they were still new to energy allocation. They used their full power in every attack, and in combination with their tension and fear, their energy

consumption was multiplied. Without Wang Shishi's help and support, they would've been killed by the mutated beasts. They were completely exhausted after only a few minutes of fighting.

Suddenly, the wall along the passageway came crashing down. Without the support of the wall, the ceiling collapsed as well.

A bunch of mutated beasts fell down from the higher floors. The situation had just gotten worse.

Chapter 160: Breakthrough

The tower was shaking because of the continuous beast attacks, the cement falling and hitting their heads. Meanwhile, there were more and more cracks on the ceiling, the mutated beasts also getting crashed by the huge rocks. No one knew when the tower was going to collapse and fall on them all.

“Luo Yuan, what we can do? We can’t stay here anymore, we have to leave!” Huang Jiahui screamed out in fear.

“Little Yuan is getting weaker!” Zhao Yali shouted in tears. “Can anyone check on him?”

Everyone was shocked. Huang Jiahui was too distracted and almost got bitten by a mutant. She shouted, “Wang Shishi, leave this to us! You go check on Luo Yuan!”

Wang Shishi had been distracted as well, but she turned around right away and rushed towards Luo Yuan. He was leaning against the wall, his face pale. His heart only beat 7-8 times per minute now. Normal people would have already died, but he was only physically weak.

“Brother Luo, how are you feeling?”

Luo Yuan tried his best to wave. He did not have enough energy to speak. However, Wang Shishi did not understand and kept crying. She thought Luo Yuan was going to die. “What happened to him?” she said. “He was totally fine just now. You really didn’t

see anything?”

“I don’t know, I really have no idea,” Zhao Yali replied. She looked pale and she was crying as well.

Luo Yuan twitched his mouth, feeling helpless. He continued to control his heartbeat, until suddenly his body shook and his heart started pumping wildly. After a while, he managed to slowly stand up.

“I’m fine, I told you that I’m fine.”

Both women were surprised, but their eyes were still full of tears. Luo Yuan looked energized, his pale face turning rosy again.

“Understanding the Earth Stomp. You’re obtaining extra earth energy as a supportive, special trait of long lasting energy. In other words, you will not feel exhausted anymore. Secondary Power: Fast Recovery. Sensitivity power will be consumed throughout the recovery process until it is over.”

He looked very calm, as if he had been drained of any emotions. He glanced across the space and began to walk towards the beasts, slowly increasing his speed.

“Move!” Luo Yuan shouted.

His voice was so powerful, they could still hear its echo a few seconds after he had spoken. Everyone naturally made way for him

despite the fact that they were fighting the beasts. It only took Luo Yuan a few steps to reach the beasts and start to kill them. The scene was full of blood, and flesh was flying everywhere.

His special power allowed him to fully perform without having to consider his physical strength. He could give out a minimum of around 20 strikes per second, and most of the mutated beasts were chopped more than 10 times before they died. He was moving at a very fast pace, creating a path through the beasts to escape.

“Everyone follow me! Let’s get out of here!”

They all were relieved that Luo Yuan had recovered. They quickly picked up their weapons and bullets, and followed him. After a few minutes of running, they finally reached the staircase. However, the staircase was almost detached from the building. The beasts had been stepping on it for too long. Some of the beasts began to jump down from the higher floors. The first floor was fully occupied by them.

“Shishi, take care of the mutants up there!” Luo Yuan said as he glared up at them.

“Yes, Brother Luo,” Wang Shishi replied.

The flying shuttle was travelling through the air, and the next second a very long bloodprint had appeared on the floor as the shuttle penetrated a row of beasts. After a few shots with it, all the mutated beasts had been turned into corpses and Wang Shishi had turned pale. She had finished almost all her energy.

Luo Yuan did not dare delay the attack. He realized that she could not continue anymore, so he shouted, “Hold on to your weapons! We can use guns now!”

As soon as he had finished talking, he grabbed Huo Dong and threw him up to the first floor. Without any mental preparation, Huo Dong flew into the air, screaming out loud. He thought he would fall hard on the floor, but he didn't. He only rolled a few times before landing without any injuries. In fact, Luo Yuan had already mastered his power and was able to use it any way he wanted.

Huo Dong immediately got his idea and took out his sniper gun and began to fire. A moment later, Lin Xiaoji was thrown up to the first floor as well, followed by Huang Jiahui and Wang Xianguang. Finally, the battle subsided a little as there were more people upstairs and more bullets being used.

All the bullets had been modified into green level bullets, which were very powerful in penetration. Each bullet could penetrate around 10 mutated beasts with a single shot. Luo Yuan threw Zhao Yali up to the first floor and then jumped up to meet them. He was stunned when he faced the scene there, and he was not one to be stunned easily.

The first floor had no roof anymore and most of the walls had collapsed. It was already a miracle that the tower was still standing. They could see that the streets outside were occupied by countless mutated beasts. Suddenly, Luo Yuan pulled Cao Lin back before a huge, several tons heavy piece of concrete fell on the spot

where she had just been standing. The concrete hit the ground, creating a big hole on the first floor. Cao Lin was frightened. She would have been smashed if Luo Yuan had not pulled her away.

Things would only get more dangerous if they stayed there, so Luo Yuan said decisively, “Everyone get your weapons and follow me!”

Luo Yuan frowned as he noticed Zhao Yali’s empty hands. “Does anyone have an extra gun to give her?” he asked.

“Use mine,” Wang Xianguang said generously. “I can use my knife.”

Luo Yuan looked at her for a second and realized there was a thick blood clot on her smooth skin. She looked more determined and stronger compared to the last few days. Huo Dong, Lin Xiaoji and Cao Lin had changed as well. They were going to be qualified survivors if they managed to survive these battles. That’s right, not warriors, but qualified survivors. Zhao Yali carefully took the gun from Wang Xianguang.

“Just stick by me later,” Wang Xianguang said sympathetically.

Zhao Yali looked at her gratefully and nodded, “Thank you so much.”

They formed a team with Luo Yuan as their leader and rushed towards the beasts. Unless they were in a big group, the beasts

were not a threat to Luo Yuan as they were slower than his attacking speed. As long as Luo Yuan had unlimited energy, they were nothing to be afraid of.

After a few minutes, they ran out of the tower and saw a lot more mutated beasts. Wang Shishi almost collapsed. She has been using too much of her power and her head was in extreme pain. Her nose and ears were also bleeding non-stop. Everyone would be in danger without her help. It would be really overwhelming to only rely on Luo Yuan. He quickly checked their surroundings and spotted the vines on a nearby building.

Most of the buildings there were decrepit houses, easy to collapse if the beasts hit them. It was better to climb up the building rather than hide inside the house as most of the mutated beasts could not climb.

“Shishi, don’t fall asleep. We’re heading to that house.”

Wang Shishi looked very pale and weak. She nodded as her body staggered. Huang Jiahui was saddened by her condition. Wang Shishi fainted, but luckily Luo Yuan caught her before the mutated beasts could get to her. Everyone felt more stressed without Wang Shishi, but they tried their best to fight. They almost died trying to escape, and everyone was injured by the end.

Chapter 161: Progress

There were a lot of vines dropping down from the building. Most of them climbed quickly like they were monkeys in their previous lives. Thanks to the improvement in their physical strength, even Zhao Yali managed to catch up although she had hardly had any physical exercise. It was not a very tall building, so they managed to climb to the rooftop in less than a minute.

Huang Jiahui took out her gun and took aim at several beasts on the ground. She shot a few of them as she told Luo Yuan, “Hurry up!”

Luo Yuan nodded and killed a few of the beasts nearby before putting his knife away. Then he grabbed a vine and climbed the building using one hand, while he used the other one to carry Wang Shishi. Apparently, his speed was not affected by the extra weight. A few mutated beasts tried to attack him, but they did not succeed because they could not climb. Luo Yuan finally reached the rooftop, put Wang Shishi down and left her to Huang Jiahui.

The vines were growing all over the place on the rooftop making it seem like a mini forest. Luo Yuan walked around to check if it was safe and killed a few other mutants. Then he looked down at the ground and realized only a couple of mutated beasts were trying to climb using the vines. He assumed the everybody else could kill them easily.

“It’s a safe place to stay. All of you wait here, I’ll be back soon,” Luo Yuan said.

“Where are you going?” Huang Jiahui asked.

“I’m going to check on the giant lizard and the mutated dog. It’ll just take a short while, I’ll be back,” Luo Yuan said.

“You take care then,” Huang Jihui replied. She knew Luo Yuan could handle it.

Luo Yuan nodded and looked at the mutated beasts on the ground. He jumped down without hesitation. Stepping on the head of a mutated beast that looked like a giant dog caused its neck to snap with a loud cracking sound immediately. He jumped several more times until he managed to escape.

The enchanted worm seemed to have another idea, though. A mutated beast suddenly roared, and all the mutated beasts quickly moved away to make way for it. The beast was glowing like the northern lights. Luo Yuan suddenly felt the danger as he was about to land, and quickly used his Will to slow down his movement so he would stop 4-5 meters away from the mutated beast.

Luo Yuan realized the bright flame was very scary. It had even managed to kill a few other mutated beasts which had not escaped in time. Several enchanted worms came out of the noses of the carcasses and tried to slither away. Luo Yuan stepped back, frightened by the scene. Although he was physically strong, he might not be able to handle their poison and also realized several mutated beasts were trying to move in his direction. He would have a hard time if they all attacked him together.

He naturally reached into his backpack to get the spears, but he suddenly stopped. He tried to calculate the distance from the building where his people were waiting. Knowing they would not be affected, the capillaries under his skin immediately appeared and extended to his neck. His blood was boiling inside his body as he slowly lifted his foot from the ground. Apparently, he was attracting the energy of the Earth, because the ground had begun to shake.

Suddenly, he stepped on the ground again and a force swept across it. The ground exploded, creating a powerful vibration and causing all the concrete to fly up into the sky. Most of the mutated beasts had been thrown upwards; their bodies were torn off before they even fell back to the ground. Tons of blood dripped down like rain, and all the buildings nearby collapsed.

Most of the creatures were white and light blue level. None of them was blue rank. All the mutated beasts in the affected region were dead, including the enchanted worms.

Luo Yuan had not killed any of the worms earlier on purpose because he had felt that they were too tiny to bother. However, a few hundred of them had died at once under the power of the Earth Stomp.

Suddenly, a bunch of mutated beasts was rushing towards him. If someone had been standing on a tall building, they might have been able to see the group of mutated beasts around the giant lizard and Lao Huang leaving and changing their direction.

“Great migration? I’m not afraid!” Luo Yuan shouted as he threw

away the intestine hanging on his shoulder.

He rushed towards the beasts with his Zhanmadao, leaping naturally into the air. Suddenly, the ground cracked, and stones went flying everywhere. There were five giant, earthworm-like creatures with huge mouths emerging from the ground, trying to bite through thin air. The earthworms attempted to return underground to prepare for another attack, but unfortunately, Luo Yuan cut through their soft bodies as he landed.

He was on alert again, grateful that the enchanted worms did not control the flying creatures. However, he realized he was wrong as he saw bugs and mutated birds flying towards him. Luckily, it looked like a manageable number compared to the mutated beasts on the ground. They were flying very fast, though. The next second they were already above his head.

He was worried about Huang Jiahui and the others, and he turned around to check the sky above the building. He realized the creatures were not flying towards the rooftop, but they were all ready to attack him along with the beasts on the ground.

Several gray-colored birds began to attack Luo Yuan right after he killed an earthworm. Apparently, they were more aggressive than the mutated beasts on the around him. He had no way to escape. Countless mutated beasts surrounded him. The only thing he could do was kill them at a very high speed, leaving an infinite number of bird carcasses on the ground.

However, even though he had been trying his best to kill them, there were still several mutated birds poking at his body. The

green level bulletproof vest protected him, and all the birds who attacked him got smashed into flesh and blood.

The birds had evolved extremely, their beaks constituting two-thirds of their body. That helped reduce air resistance and increase the momentum of their attack. One would die if they got hit by the birds without any protection.

Luo Yuan kept stepping back, leaving many footprints on the ground. Suddenly, he could not move anymore. He was prevented by the earthworms he had just cut. The beasts ran away, and a creature that looked like a unicorn rushed toward him and hit him in the chest. Luo Yuan flew backward, falling on the beasts.

The Earth began to shake again, the Earth Stomp turning all the carcasses into ashes. Luo Yuan began to gasp. He was exhausted after using the Earth Stomp two times in a row. He stood on top of a waste area to check his surroundings and realized there were even more mutated beasts coming.

The enchanted worms did not seem to be afraid. They were still rushing towards him. He realized that he could not keep using the same strategy anymore. Five Earth Stomps was his limit. He would need to find another solution.

Chapter 162: Transformation

The whole street was occupied by a huge group of mutated beasts that had spread at a distance of 4-5 kilometers. Based on that observation, Luo Yuan estimated that there were more than 500,000 mutated beasts. The thought made everyone feel hopeless. They were too weak to fight the huge group of beasts.

Of course, Luo Yuan could not handle all the beasts, but he could try to escape. However, everyone else would die if he did. An intense energy slowly penetrated his feet and refreshed his body, but it was not sufficient to fully restore his energy. He needed about 2-3 hours to recover fully, but he had no time to rest.

Luo Yuan was trying to endure attacks from many different directions. He was grateful that the mutated beasts were quite big. Their size made them easier to handle compared to the smaller mutants.

However, he did not dare jump like he used to anymore. The sky was full of mutated birds, making it hard for him to move. If he jumped too high into the air, he would become prey for the birds. He could not think of any other solution except finding the giant lizard as soon as possible.

The roaring sounds of the giant lizard and Lao Huang were getting weaker. Luo Yuan could sense their fear and hopelessness, but he was calm enough to continue killing the beasts. Countless mutated beasts were cut into two when they came near him.

“Your knife skill has been upgraded after a period of intensive training.”

Suddenly, the system beeped again. Luo Yuan felt everything become different. It felt so easy to kill as if his motions were no longer restricted.

He realized the air would begin to circulate every time he was about to attack. He knew he was lucky, and he realized things went even smoother when one had some good luck. Those without good luck needed to put in a lot more effort to achieve their goals. He also realized he could use the nature's energy to change the environment when his knife skill reached a certain level of expertise.

Unfortunately, his power was still too weak to make a huge impact on the environment. His speed was getting faster than ever, but Luo Yuan believed he could improve and get even stronger in the future.

He suddenly realized everything had begun to slow down. He noticed that the mutated beasts were moving slower and the enchanted worms were having trouble controlling them.

It was not a big deal for mammals, but it was a big deal for birds. If their motions were forced to slow down abruptly, they would fall to the ground and die. Many mutated birds had been rushing towards Luo Yuan before an energy akin to an unseen hand suddenly pulled at them, and they fell onto the huge group of mutated beasts at a high momentum.

One of the blue mutated beasts collided with a bird and they exploded together. The whole group of beasts and birds exploded, their flesh going everywhere.

Luo Yuan felt relieved. The falling birds had helped diffuse the situation. He looked at the scene and suddenly felt inspired. He could not believe that the enormous impact he had just made was just a small upgrade of his Knife Skill. He silently opened up the status panel and realized that “Knife Expertise: 19” had become “Knife Specialist: 0”. That explains why he felt different. He had just leveled up.

No matter how powerful the enchanted worm was, without a host, it was still a tiny useless worm that anyone could kill. It had been difficult to kill the worms earlier because they had been using their hosts as a shield. However, things were different now that Luo Yuan had become powerful enough to destroy the hosts.

Luo Yuan visualized a stronger energy inside his body. His surroundings heated up like an oven and things began to get disfigured. A deadly energy suddenly occupied the whole atmosphere.

Under the influence of Luo Yuan’s power, the mutated beasts were moving slower than ever. Some of them had even stopped moving because they were too close to him. They hardly had any time to react as he walked in front of them. Luo Yuan pushed a man-like creature lightly, and it fell to the ground like a corpse. There was an increasing number of mutated beasts rushing towards Luo Yuan. They all looked enchanted as they stopped

moving.

The scene was eerie. Wherever Luo Yuan passed, the mutated beasts would stop moving and fall to the ground. Several mutated beasts were hit by the beasts coming from the back, and a thick layer of dark flesh was formed. Luo Yuan did not even need to kill them with his bare hands. The mutated beasts just fell dead as he passed by.

Chapter 163: Retreat

There was a strange energy around Luo Yuan. If one could see souls, then they might have been able to see Luo Yuan's soul that was as bright as the sun and the souls of the enchanted worms that were like fireflies.

Luo Yuan was moving between the mutated beasts, leaving a huge number of carcasses on the ground as he took his leave. He ran as quickly as he could and reached his destination in less than ten minutes. It was a hill made of countless corpses. Many mutated beasts were trying to climb the hill, but they were all being pulled by a strong force. Most of the beasts fell back to the ground disfigured.

The hill was more than ten meters high. There were several hills like that at different spots. It was not difficult to imagine how many mutated beasts the giant lizard and Lao Huang had killed. Luo Yuan could not see them because the hills were blocking them. He could only hear the weak roars of the giant lizard. There was no sound from Lao Huang.

Luo Yuan increased his speed and pulled out his Zhanmadao again to kill the mutated beasts blocking his way. He was like a light bulb in the darkness, as bright as the sun. The mutated beasts that had been attacking the giant lizard began to attack Luo Yuan. However, they were all dead before they could even get near him.

The giant lizard seemed to know that Luo Yuan was there, and it roared a little louder in surprise. It got up from the ground, several corpses hanging from its body. It was severely injured and bleeding

from most places.

It gasped as blood gushed out from all the wounds on its body. The giant lizard only managed to stand for a short while before it fell back on the ground again. There were a few more mutated beasts hanging from its body, still trying to bite it. However, the giant lizard was a dark blue mutated beast. It was too strong to be hurt by a blue mutated beast.

Luo Yuan rushed up to the giant lizard and killed all the mutated beasts hanging from it. Most of the beasts were already dead when Luo Yuan got to them. The giant lizard tried its best to look at Luo Yuan for a second before it fell asleep.

“Loyalty.”

The system beeped again. Luo Yuan looked at the giant lizard, and then took out two food cubes made from Archelon eggs. The giant lizard was sensitive to smell. As soon as it got a whiff of the food, it opened its eyes. However, it did not act as crazy as it used to. It just looked at Luo Yuan, and then ate the food on his palm when he nodded.

The food cubes were high in energy, and the giant lizard felt much better after less than thirty seconds. Its body stopped shaking, and the muscles around its wounds began to shrink. It was not bleeding much anymore either. Luo Yuan continued to look for Lao Huang, who seemed to have gone missing.

It was important to find it, dead or alive. Its carcass would be a

good source of power. Luo Yuan was very rational because of the effect of the Earth Stomp.

After searching for a while, he finally found something. It was a bunch of red furs. It was fluffy and shiny, but it felt cold to the touch.

He used his identification power on it.

“Flaming Dog Fur”

“Function: Material”

“Element: Fire”

“Rarity: Dark Blue”

“Weight: 10 grams.”

“Complementary Function: Heat Absorption”

“Remarks: The Flaming Dog is a smart, spiritual creature of the fire element. It has all the characteristics of a dog, except that its fur can act as a natural cooler. It can absorb heat based on the temperature difference between the fur and the atmosphere.”

The fur belonged to Lao Huang, which meant that it had to be

somewhere nearby. Luo Yuan continued to scan through the carcasses on the ground. After searching for a while, he finally found Lao Huang. He could not scan it, but he was sure it was still alive. Luo Yuan walked in its direction, pushing away carcasses one by one.

He managed to find its body after a minute. Lao Huang's condition was worse than the giant lizard's. It was full of blood, and it was not moving at all. Most people would have just thought it was dead, but Luo Yuan could feel its body temperature and its weak heartbeat. It looked pitiful. One of its legs was broken, and its tail was missing. The worst thing was that part of its skin had been torn off. Luo Yuan could see the bones in most parts of its body. It was a miracle that it was still alive after suffering such injuries.

Luo Yuan quickly took out all the food cubes and stuffed them into Lao Huang's mouth. Then he found a stiff mutated beast and twisted its neck. The neck broke, tons of blood gushing out from the big wound. Luo Yuan stuffed the mutated beast into Lao Huang's mouth, hoping that the blood would help push the food cubes into its stomach and speed up digestion. Its survival was depending solely on fate.

Suddenly, Luo Yuan realized that other than the few hundred beasts nearby, the rest of the group of beasts was gone. They had come and left without a sign. The sky and land had become peaceful once again. The only thing left was the many carcasses all over the area. Luo Yuan waited for another ten minutes until the system beeped again. He finally confirmed that the beasts were gone and weren't coming back.

The enchanted worms seemed to have their weak point too. When they were facing large-scale death, it was natural for them to retreat. Luo Yuan felt relieved and slowly withdrew from the Earth Stomp. He started feeling dizzy, but he managed to stand still. He discovered that his whole body hurt from exhaustion.

It was finally over. Not caring about the dirt, Luo Yuan sat down on the ground. After resting for a few minutes, he opened up the status panel to check the mission information.

“Current Mission: B-Level Mission, Escape.”

“Mission Requirement: A minimum of four people have to escape successfully.”

“Mission Completed.”

“Time of Completion: 3 hours and 30 minutes.”

“Mission Evaluation: Excellent.”

“Character: Luo Yuan”

“Completion: 6%”

“Reward Basic Experience Value 606!”

“Excellent Evaluation, Experience Value 606!”

“Experience: 2,603,400”

“Battle Beast: Forest Giant Lizard”

“Completion: 40%”

“Reward Basic Experience Value 6,040!”

“Good Evaluation, Experience Value 6,040!”

“Experience: 93,660”

Luo Yuan looked at the experience points and realized he had less than 9,000 points to go to upgrade to Level 9 while the giant lizard only had a few hundred points to go. If he were lucky, he would only need to complete another B-Level Mission or two lower level tasks before upgrading.

He looked at the giant lizard and Lao Huang. He did not think they could upgrade within such a short time. They could not even move yet. Apparently, they would need to stay in the city for a few more days. It was a good thing that the beasts were gone because they were too weak to fight again anytime soon.

The most important thing now was bringing everyone together and finding a safer place to stay.

Chapter 164: Recovery

Lao Huang had miraculously survived, but its condition was not good. Most parts of its flesh were gone, and some of its internal organs had been injured. Luo Yuan could even see the bones underneath its skin. If he hadn't prepared some nutritious food cubes for Lao Huang, it would have already died. Still, it could not stand up again within such a short period.

While the giant lizard was slightly better than Lao Huang, based on Luo Yuan's judgment, neither battle beast could go on a long journey for the time being. Thus, they were forced to stay and rest in Jiaping City for some time. They found the train station very quickly. The station did not just act as the main point of the city transportation. It was also an excellent shelter during wartime. It was a lot stronger and safer than other buildings, which were already corroded.

When they reached the entrance, they smelled a strong, awful stench coming from inside. There were plenty of corpses in the station. Apparently, a lot of survivors had been staying there before they turned into the skeletons on the floor. Since they were going to stay there for some time, they could not live with that awful smell every day. After checking their surroundings, the first thing they had to do was throw away all the corpses and skeletons in the station.

They acted very fast. After half an hour, all the bodies and skeletons were gone. The awful smell remained in the station due to inadequate ventilation, but they began to get used to it after a while. In fact, they were lucky to even find such a reliable, safe shelter during wartime. Zhao Yali tried her best to overcome her

fear and quickly sat down in the corner right after she finished cleaning. She was shivering. Luo Yuan sighed as he watched her reaction.

“Yali, are you alright?” he asked as he walked towards her.

“I'm all right,” Zhao Yali said, taking a deep breath.

Luo Yuan remained silent. After a moment, he said, “You’ll be fine sooner or later.”

Zhao Yali cried softly when she heard him. She said, “But... but I’m scared. I thought I was going to die. Lao Huang is going to leave me. I’ve always been a coward, I used not even to be able to look at a dead person, but I just threw away all those skeletons by myself. I’m afraid people will judge me.”

Zhao Yali shivered helplessly, and began to talk nonsense, “I know I shouldn’t blame you, but I still hate you. Why are you bringing me along? I’m just an ordinary person. I’m not as strong as Wang Xianguang or Huang Jiahui, let alone Wang Shishi. I just want to live a regular life as long as I can, not try to escape from beasts on a daily basis.”

Luo Yuan sighed. He understood that it had been a long, tough journey. He had been through a lot of serious battles himself. Zhao Yali was only an ordinary person, and her life was very fragile. However, Luo Yuan also knew it would be more dangerous if they stopped moving. The beasts would only get stronger as time passed, and they would not be able to survive without a mutual

alliance. They would only be safe when they reached the west region.

However, that seemed to be too much for Zhao Yali. It was all unreal to her, and the journey was far too long.

Luo Yuan sighed and said, “You’re right, I was probably too selfish. I shouldn’t have dragged you into this risky plan. We will be staying here longer this time. If you don’t want to come with us, then I’ll send you back home. No one will hurt you as long as Lao Huang is with you.”

Zhao Yali had stopped sobbing. She looked at Luo Yuan and realized he had changed a lot. He was no longer the young man that she had known. Unfriendly, cold and unfamiliar, she no longer felt the intimacy she had felt long ago between the both of them. During the next few days, none of them saw any mutated beasts or insects.

Luo Yuan walked around the city a few times during that period to ensure their safety. There were a few regular mutated beasts, but he had not encountered any mutated beasts controlled by tentacle crypt worms. Apparently, the tentacle crypt worms had learned their lesson during their earlier battle and did not dare go near Luo Yuan anymore. Perhaps, they had already left the city.

There was nothing else left, other than a few tiny bugs and regular mutated beasts. It seemed that the tentacle crypt worms had successfully conquered the entire city because there was nothing left there after their departure. Luo Yuan felt scared as he recalled the battle scene. He felt grateful that he had managed to

upgrade his Knife Expertise to Knife Specialist. Had he not, they might not have been able to escape, and the giant lizard and Lao Huang would probably not have been able to survive.

Luo Yuan knew that once he released his full power, those blue level mutated beasts would lose the ability to attack and kneel before him. The stronger ones would turn around and run away, while the weaker ones, such as light blue mutated beasts, would begin feeling dizzy and throwing up right before they died. White level mutated beasts would be too weak to escape. They would all die instantly.

Luo Yuan was delighted by his discovery. He would not have to worry about small mutants anymore. Besides, this would be a useful power during a battle against giant beasts. On the other hand, he was thankful that he had not continued the trial and error method inside the train station, or most of them would have died.

However, he also realized that he would have to pay a higher price for that kind of power. Luo Yuan had noticed that as he grew stronger, his consumption of Sensitivity and Will increased as well. Sometimes, he even felt tired and dizzy, and his head started to hurt.

Of course, those side effects were trivial compared to the power he had gained. After all, he would only need to use that power if they bumped into a big group of mutated beasts again. He would master it and strengthen his Will and Sensitivity by practicing more.

Sub-attributes like Intelligence, Sensitivity, and Will manifested in mysterious ways, and Luo Yuan found it tough to understand their connection fully. He could only guess that the three of them were related to some uncertain biology of the soul. So far, there was no substantial evidence which could prove the existence of a soul. All there was, was human speculation and imagination.

However, the system was able to update its information on sub-attributes by using data analysis. Also, there was a lot more information provided regarding the forecast and strengthened power for each mission he completed. Luo Yuan was assuming that the system was something beyond human civilization as he was not aware of any theory which could currently justify the existence of the system. Based on the information that he had, people would not even have those powers after 50 or 100 years. Anyway, it was not like his speculations would make any difference in the current situation.

Chapter 165: Testing Poisons

In a couple of days, there was an awful rotten smell flowing in the air, attracting several mutated flies. Each fly was as big as a frog, and they all had green skin and produced a deafening, noisy sound when they flew. If that were all they could do, then it would not have been that big of a deal. Sound pollution was not that dangerous after all.

However, that kind of mutant was attracted to wounds and could absorb a bigger volume of blood than its body size. The human skin could not resist such an attack. If one got stung, one might lose a few hundred milliliters of blood. Still, the flies did not pose such a significant threat to them, considering they had spent almost a month in the forest.

A group of survivors was carefully walking down the moss-covered street. Their clothes were shabby, and their hair and face were filthy. There were many scars with black bloodstains on their bodies, and some of their wounds were still bleeding, pus dripping out of them. The most disgusting thing about them were the worms crawling on their injuries.

They were leaning on each other, trying their best to move forward. A very buff, tan guy, was walking ahead of the team. He looked highly alert as he kept checking their surroundings.

Suddenly, he felt something strange on his arm and hit it without even checking to see what it was. A big fly had been smashed, lying in a small puddle of blood on his palm. Dexterity was crucial for anyone living in the forest. If one didn't react fast, they would die.

The man was acting slightly slower as he realized the blood on his palm was his. He frowned and lifted the fly up into the air. He checked it, but he did not notice anything special about it. It did not seem to be venomous either. He looked further up front and realized there were a lot more of them. He had hesitated for a while before he stuffed the fly into his mouth.

The team had run out of food a day ago. All the dried meat they had kept had been finished, and starvation had taken the lives of three people's lives. If the insects were edible, then they would have finally found some food. If there was an excess of them, they could sustain them for the next few days. Finding a food source was crucial during the end of the world. Although there were many mutated beasts around, they could not directly attack the stronger ones, and even the weaker ones had become trickier to hunt these days. They would need to put in a lot of effort to catch a few. However, the team was big, and many of them were injured. One beast would not be enough to feed so many mouths.

Besides, not all living things were edible. Some species could be harmful to the human body. One needed experience and good judgment. However, sometimes survival knowledge was not entirely reliable. Some creatures looked harmless but were venomous. The only way to tell was to examine them one by one. If they were lucky, they might only get a stomachache for a few days. If the creatures were venomous though, they could die. So far, five members of the team had died of food poisoning.

Besides, it was not safe to test the food by eating the creatures. They had found that there were too many different species after the evolution. It felt like a powerful catalyst had been added to the

world, and most living things had entered an uncontrollable situation and evolved into thousands of different kinds of creatures.

"It's my turn," a pale man walking in the back said.

Sweat was dripping down his forehead and his nose. One of his legs was damp with his blood, and he had a big wound on one of his thighs. It seemed like his main blood vessels were broken, and he left a large blood print on the ground as he walked. He could hardly move without anyone helping him.

As he saw the young man hesitate, he smiled helplessly and said, "We can't break the rules. I know I won't be able to make it. It won't benefit anyone if you insist on dragging me along. Let me test the poison. I can't even move anymore. Let me at least do something for you before I die."

"Don't give up, Qian Cheng! We will not give up on any of our friends from Three Camps! Not till death does us part," a guy quickly told Qian Cheng as he sensed his intention to die.

"Commander, I know my condition. I don't want to make things worse. Let me stay here. I really can't take it anymore." The man smiled and struggled away from his friend before slumping down on the ground.

"Let me have it. Don't let me die hungry," the man said with a smile. He had seen many of his friends leave them and was no longer afraid of death.

“Let him have it,” the commander ordered with a wave.

The tan man twitched his lips but remained silent. He had gotten used to this a long time ago. It had already happened to the team several times. Those who could not take it had died or committed suicide. Qian Cheng took the mutated fly from the tan man and stuffed it into his mouth. He tried very hard to chew it and swallowed it.

He seemed to get worse after eating the fly. Sweat was dripping like water down his face. He waved his hand as he saw someone trying to check on him. He did not want them to go near him.

Ten minutes later, he was not feeling anything. “It’s edible. It’s not venomous,” he told his team members before he fell to the ground again.

He had consumed his last bit of energy. Suddenly, there was a big puddle of blood under his body. A warrior tried to check his pulse but kept shaking his head. The whole team immediately went silent.

“Keep walking! We are just 100 kilometers away from Shanghai. We would probably get there in a day if we were walking at a reasonable pace. We might be moving slower now, but based on our current speed, we can still reach it in three or four days’ time. We’re already here. We must get there no matter what!” the commander said seriously.

He knew that they would not be able to arrive there in such a short time. The route they were taking was not as advanced as it used to be before the mutation outbreak. There were dangers in the forest, and they could die if they were not careful enough. Plus, their physical condition was not as good as it used to be anymore. Most of them had several injuries and wounds on their bodies. Some of them could even die in their sleep.

In fact, the commander would be grateful if he managed to bring the team to Shanghai in half a month. However, reality was cruel. He knew it was almost impossible as they had lost contact with the main team since the great migration. There had been about 200 members on the first day, and now there were only about ten team members left. Some of the warriors had not even frowned when they'd lost their arms in the battlefield, but they had secretly committed suicide, no longer able to stand the long journey and the severe injuries. The team gave no response to the commander. They were all feeling hopeless.

Suddenly, someone sensed something strange and shouted, "Commander! There's something wrong here. It's too quiet."

Everyone quickly came to a stop. It dawned upon the team that there have not been any encounters with giant mutated beasts along the journey. It was indeed strange. How peculiar.

Chapter 166: Excitement

Even a territory littered with powerful mutated beasts would not be as quiet as their current location. Aside from the tiny flies, there was nothing else. Based on past experiences, the only explanation for the silence was that they were on a radioactive site. However, they realized there were a lot of plants in the area. Apparently, their initial theory had been wrong.

“Commander, it looks strange. Shall we go back?” someone asked desperately.

Everyone gathered, looking very depressed. The commander looked at them for a second and realized that the scene felt familiar. He knew there would be a few more people committing suicide soon. They had been relying on their will to sustain them until now. Once they gave up, they would all kill themselves.

“We can’t go back anymore,” he said. “We need to keep moving. There’s no way back! Move!”

“I’d rather die than return,” another man said.

“I’d rather die on the journey.” someone else mumbled.

Everyone looked numb. The team was walking at a very slow pace. Suddenly, one of the team members fell to the ground, struggling to get back up. He had no more energy. Everyone could smell an awful scent coming from his body. One of the team members tore his shirt off, only to discover that his chest had

started to rot. Several worms were crawling in and around his wounds.

After a while, the team resumed walking. The further the team went, the more flies they could see. A single mutated fly was not scary. Anyone could kill it. However, a group of mutated flies could be very dangerous. Everyone had been paying a lot of attention, but many of them had still not been able to escape the call of death. The flies had sucked their blood until they died.

The commander looked at the few remaining members of the team and sighed. He began to feel hopeless. He knew it would be difficult for them to defeat the mutated flies. Suddenly, someone noticed something strange.

"There's a carcass up ahead. It's still fresh. It's yet to become a skeleton."

Maintaining a carcass for extended periods of time was hard. The rate of decomposition was very fast even if no animals were trying to eat the flesh. Worms and bacteria helped decompose the carcasses. In other words, any carcass would go rotten in less than three days.

"There's a bullet hole. Someone has been here."

"There's also a bullet shell."

"The beast is about three meters tall and had been killed with a

knife. It must have been someone very powerful, or someone that owned an excellent knife,” someone said in an incredulous tone.

The soldiers found more carcasses as they moved on. There was a hill of carcasses blocking the street, emitting an intense, awful smell. As they walked on, they saw a lot more mutated flies and were forced to stop moving forward. Finally, they found a building they where they could seek shelter.

“Everyone come here. Let’s have a meeting,” the commander said after performing a safety inspection of the building.

“We can now confirm that there were several survivors from a battle that must have taken place a few days ago. Based on the carcasses we have seen, it must have been a big group of survivors,” one of them said.

“These men didn't have many weapons. I could not find many shells, and knives made most of the wounds on the carcasses. We can’t confirm whether all the mutated beasts were killed by this group, though. If that's the case, then it must have been a group of powerful soldiers,” another man said.

Everyone took a deep breath, looking a lot more energetic than before. They thought it would have taken 2,000 - 6,000 soldiers with tanks and cannons to kill a few hundred dark blue mutated beasts.

“If they did not have many bullets, that means a lot of them must have been evolved humans.”

“Evolved men do not possess that kind of power. Although I've never met one, a few experienced generals would be enough to kill any beast if they had a sufficient amount of weapons,” someone else said.

“Evolved men are not as weak as that. A short period of training would be sufficient for them to take down a soldier who has been training for five to six years,” the commander said, shaking his head.

His status afforded him more knowledge than the rest of the men. If evolved humans were as weak as they thought, the government and army would not have conducted an inspection as fast as they did. They were trying to maintain the social order as well as draw the line. There was even a task force at his military base formed exclusively by evolved humans. Most of them had become senior generals or mayors as soon as they had joined the army, and their salary was much better than his.

“Stop analyzing such useless things. They just killed all the beasts in the city, so they must still be somewhere in the area, or planning to make Jiaping City their base. We have to find them and treat our friends. Platoon Wang, give me the map!”

He thought the survivors were going to make this city their base because he did not know anything about the tentacle crypt worm. A man with a big scar on his face took a map out of a plastic bag and opened it carefully. It was a 1.5-meter long, 1.5-meter wide map of Jiangnan Province. They could see the main roads of Jiaping City.

“Based on the current critical situation, they must be residing at the bomb shelter, an underground tunnel or the defense worksite. However, Jiaping City fell a while ago, so there are only two possibilities. Besides, the carcasses are here, so they must be somewhere nearby,” he said before he drew a circle on the map.

“But there are three train stations and a shelter,” someone said gloomily.

“Then we will search them one by one. It’s better than simply going somewhere else,” the commander said. “All of you with severe injuries will stay here. The rest will split into four groups. Each team will go to one of the locations we mentioned. If you don’t see anyone, retreat immediately. If you find them, ask for assistance. Please be sincere. We are seeking their help after all. We will join their army if they ask us to.”

If this had been before the end of the world, many of them would have protested. Military discipline was as important to the men as their lives. No one would dare do anything even remotely close to treachery. However, no one said a word about it now.

“That’s the final plan. We will depart in half an hour. Now rest!” the commander said, looking slightly excited.

Chapter 167: Sorting Out

It had been three peaceful days.

It was undoubtedly an enjoyable time for Luo Yuan and the rest of the survivors. They could finally get some sleep and not need to worry about the weather the next day or getting attacked by mutated beasts. Most importantly, they did not have to worry about losing their lives.

Jiaping City had been cleaned up and was temporarily safe. It would take ten to fifteen days for mutated beasts from other areas to come and conquer it.

The situation also allowed Luo Yuan some private time to think and sort out his abilities.

He was sitting cross-legged far from the team, in front of the subway station. He closed his eyes, and his black Zhanmadao was on the concrete floor right in front of him.

An invincible power surrounded the sword. Any ordinary human would feel it at first glance. Even some mutated flies nearby dared not come closer.

Suddenly, something amazing happened.

The Zhanmadao started to quiver. At first, Luo Yuan thought that he was hallucinating, but as time passed, it trembled more and

more, producing a buzzing vibration. This was caused by the high-frequency vibration of the knife.

It kept quivering until Luo Yuan suddenly opened his eyes.

Then the buzzing sound stopped.

Luo Yuan stood up and pulled out the Zhanmadao. He looked at it carefully with joy in his eyes.

This was a phenomenon that he had only recently discovered. The more he used the knife, the better it performed. It felt like the knife was the extension of his body, a continuation of his blood. This was not just an illusion; it was happening.

No matter where the knife was, he could sense it. Even if he asked Huang Jiahui to hide it from him in a place far away, as far as four to five hundred meters, Luo Yuan would still be able to sense its presence.

Of course, Wang Shishi had a similar ability. Her telekinesis did not just afford her the ability to sense the Zhanmadao; she was also able to control the sword. However, Luo Yuan was ecstatic to be in control of such an ability. He was not like Wang Shishi, who possessed that power by nature, but an additional ability would at the very least help him survive in a cruel world.

Luo Yuan was guessing that it was related to his Will, and not his Intuition because he had been enhancing the Zhanmadao with his

Will. It had even left a mark on the sword and created a link between the Zhanmadao and his body.

Even if one were holding two identical knives, they would still be able to tell which one was theirs when it was in their hand. Anything that they used frequently would bear a sense of familiarity.

The feeling was even clearer for someone like Luo Yuan, who was able to concentrate his Will and mark his belongings.

During that time, Luo Yuan had been sorting out his abilities. To some extent, he could not be considered a human being anymore. His strength and abilities were way beyond ordinary, his exceptional body performance showing that he had already evolved into a different species.

His lung capacity was seven to eight times larger than ordinary people's. He could hold his breath for half an hour, and he could eat ten days' worth of meals in one day. He was still able to maintain his stamina, even if he had not eaten in a few days. He could see a bird a kilometer away, and his nose was like a dog's. He could smell a variety of subtle smells in the air and even sense the moist density of the air to predict the weather.

These were just the abilities brought by his physical attributes.

His Intelligence gave him high-speed computing power, his Intuition gave him a second viewing angle as well as dynamic tracking capabilities, and his Will could make all his wishes come

true.

It might not sound as terrifying if these abilities were used individually. However, when they were all used at the same time, it was the greatest power of all. The key was handling and integrating these abilities to create the most efficient combination. In fact, Luo Yuan had felt uncoordinated since he'd left Hedong City. He had gotten all these capabilities through the system attribution in a short time, instead of earning them by training and practicing. As a result, they had not been used correctly. Also, he was tense all the time, so he had not gotten the chance to adapt to his new capabilities, which had caused inaccuracy when estimating the strength he needed to use during a battle. Fortunately, he had successfully survived all battles thanks to his luck and physical capabilities, but this had also made Luo Yuan treat this issue with seriousness.

He was just like a machine with the most advanced technology. Despite their advanced functions, machines still needed to be precise to carry out their tasks. The same theory also applied to humans.

If a man did not know how high he could jump, how fast he could run, or how strong he had to be to break his chopsticks, how could one expect him to excel at fighting? He was even more dangerous than someone who was not aware of their abilities.

In short, his lack of coordination was to blame.

What could he do about that, though? Only practice would help.

Therefore, the past few days Luo Yuan had dedicated a lot of time every day to perform basic exercises, including a variety of high-intensity exercises and Zhanmadao practice. Other than that, what Luo Yuan had done the most was try tai-chi with the elders.

Huang Jiahui had taught him how to do it. Although it was just the basic form of tai-chi, which was harmless and just helped keep one fit and in good health, it was completely different in Luo Yuan's case.

For him, mastering one was equivalent to mastering everything.

Luo Yuan was already an expert in using a knife, and the knife skill was an extended skill for boxing. So, as Luo Yuan improved his knife skill, his boxing skill improved along with it. Even though he had never trained in boxing before, when his knife skill reached the expert level, his boxing skill would be over ten points as well.

He became an expert at tai-chi within a very short period.

Just in three days of training, Luo Yuan had already mastered the essence of tai-chi. At the same time, his boxing skill had increased to 19 points, just one point away from being a professional. He now looked no different than someone who had been boxing for more than ten years.

He was not sure if this skill would help him in battle until he used it in a real fight. However, the slow movement of tai-chi was very useful in helping him coordinate and control his strength.

Suddenly, Luo Yuan frowned and shouted emotionally, "Who's out there?"

There was a figure camouflaged by a vine crouching at a corner not far from the subway station. If it were not for Luo Yuan's Intuition sensing their breathing, he wouldn't have been aware of their presence.

The person did not move. They seemed hesitant, but after a while, they pushed the camouflage away and slowly stood up. The man's body shook a bit, perhaps because of the poor blood circulation in his body after lying down for so long.

He walked step by step towards the station entrance, glancing at the pile of bones in front of it. Some were human bones while others belonged to mutated beasts. A few of them were still bloody and fresh. The dark subway station looked just like the cave of the devil.

There was nothing else he could do but make this last attempt.

He gritted his teeth and walked into the station.

Luo Yuan was shocked as he looked at the man. He was dressed in rags, covered in dirt and blood, and his hair was so filthy, it had bugs living inside it. Judging by his appearance, it was difficult to identify him.

Luo Yuan had met a lot of survivors, but none of them had been as dirty as this man.

Beggars looked cleaner than him.

Luo Yuan glanced at him, the man's stance finally giving him a small clue. "Are you a soldier?" he asked. "Or did you use to be one? Why are you here?"

The man felt pressured by Luo Yuan. Despite being an expert at the knife skill, Luo Yuan was still not able to camouflage his power. It had hit the man head on.

His body shook a bit as he said, "Yes, I am a soldier, but I've been separated from my team. There are still a bunch of my mates out there half-dead. Our Commander was hoping that...", he suddenly paused, not knowing how to address Luo Yuan. An idea popped in his mind as he continued, "He was hoping that Boss could save us and take us along."

"Save you? How many of you are there?" Luo Yuan asked as his heart beat fast.

"Thirteen, maybe less," the soldier answered.

"Less?" Luo Yuan asked curiously.

"Before we separated to look for survivors, there were fourteen of us." The soldier looked calm, but his voice trembled a little. One of

his mates was gone forever.

Luo Yuan's facial expression changed slightly. He suddenly recalled something and asked, "Where are you coming from?"

"Hedong City. We were separated when the mutation hit the city. There were hundreds of us in the team initially, but only a few of us are left now. Please help us... We are all soldiers. We're good in battle, we won't bring any trouble to you," said the soldier. Noticing that Luo Yuan was not responding to him, he suddenly kneeled down and bowed, his head hitting the floor hard.

"Bang... Bang... Bang...!"

Luo Yuan was shocked and immediately pulled the man up. His forehead was bloody, but the soldier still looked calm. Luo Yuan nodded and said, "I never said no. Please draw a map of the location for me on the ground."

The soldier was very excited. He kept thanking Luo Yuan as he quickly took a stone and started to draw on the ground.

Luo Yuan looked at the map. It was only two or three kilometers away from the subway station. He asked a few more questions and then addressed the people behind him, who had already come over after watching the scene, "You stay here. I'm going with this man. I'll be right back."

He gave Huang Jiahui and Wang Shishi a wink, and the women

nodded to show their understanding.

Although the soldier did not seem to be lying, he still had to remain on alert and be extra careful around him.

Chapter 168: Battalion Commander Zhou

Luo Yuan whistled as soon as he stepped out of the gate. The soldier was initially confused but later widened his eyes and took a few steps back. His hand automatically crept towards his dagger at his hip.

The ground quaked a little when a large object the size of a small hill could be seen from around 100 meters away. The object was a gigantic beast-approximately a dozen meters long and 6 meters tall. Scars and wounds were spotted all over its body, and its bloodied flesh made it look very intimidating. It grunted while its head pointed towards the sky and smoke that was some ten meters long came out with some sparks.

The beast was agile, it shook its head and sprinted over quickly. It was hard to describe, but the scene resembled a high-speed train approaching 200 – 300 kilometers per hour!

The soldier turned pale. He only had a similar experience once, and that image will be forever scarred in his mind. It was during the beast wave when their battalion faced beasts like the one in front of him now. A fourth level beast managed to enter their fortification from a careless mistake and had killed eight soldiers. This was on top of turning over two tanks and causing chaos that increased the death toll to more than fifty people. In the end, it met its doom at the hands of a few machine guns.

To the soldier, the appearance of such a beast was akin to seeing death itself. However, the calmness of Luo Yuan and his signaling whistle earlier had the soldier thinking. Even though he was a

nervous wreck, he managed to stay rooted without fleeing or attacking and said with much difficulty, “You...”

“Don’t worry. I see that it’s a bit far from here to where you guys rested. Walking will take too much time, why not ride my lizard?” Luo Yuan said with a smile. Just as he finished, the giant lizard had already slowed down and arrived in front of Luo Yuan. After three days of rest and light green level food, in addition to its incredible self-healing ability, it was already feeling much better despite not looking like it.

The lizard leaned towards Luo Yuan’s chest and snuggled against him - looking exactly like a playful puppy. However, the scene looked anything but cute to an ordinary person. Luo Yuan tapped the lizard’s back and hopped on it. He then spoke to the soldier, “Come up too.” The soldier gritted his teeth and nodded.

“It must be true that a soldier who has returned from the battlefield is not as easily frightened of mutated beast compared to ordinary people,” Luo Yuan thought. However, when he pulled the soldier up, he realized that the man had frozen like a statue with his muscles tensed like a rock.

Luo Yuan felt like he had accomplished his purpose. Was the distance that far? Not exactly! They would have arrived within 15 minutes if they just walked. There was no need to bring the lizard along. His sole purpose for doing so was to intimidate the soldier. No knives or guns could do that better than the massive creature in his possession.

Integrating a group into another group, particularly when a

smaller group would absorb a larger group was hard to do without a strong leader. Strong not in the sense of attitude but rather their capabilities to lead. It was especially so when the other party consists of battalion soldiers - a group that was so highly disciplined and spirited was the hardest to get along with. Luo Yuan neither expected nor imagined that he could have them completely on his side. He only hoped that they would not cause his group any trouble.

Although the giant lizard did not run, the journey had only taken them 3 minutes. The soldier almost fell when he hopped off the creature. His legs were giving up on him. Luo Yuan looked at the entrance without any intention of going in. He said, "Go let your mates know and ask them all to come out." The soldier either had a quiet personality or was too shy to speak to strangers. He nodded stiffly and went into the crumbled building instantly.

Luo Yuan waited in silence as he leaned on the lizard's back. Within a few minutes, an unkempt middle-aged man who looked like the leader came out from a hole in the building followed by five other people who looked the same. They looked closely at the gigantic beast as they walked towards Luo Yuan. Although they seemed to have mentally prepared for it, their halted steps showed that they were still fearful. To conceal their fear, they decided to walk over briskly.

"Hello, nice to meet you. I'm Zhou Yicheng, the battalion commander of this battalion. May I know your name?" The middle-aged man said with a forced smile. He looked like he had put in a lot of effort to smile, but maybe the muscles he needed had not been used for a long time as his gesture was incredibly stiff.

“It’s Luo. Battalion Commander Zhou, let’s skip the pleasantries. I’ve heard that you guys intend to join us?” Luo Yuan spoke directly. The middle-aged man was taken aback by his directness and sighed, “Yes. There’s nothing to be ashamed of. We’ve exhausted all our resources here. There’s nothing else for us to do but to wait for our deaths. I’m the battalion commander; I don’t want my comrades to die with me, so please take us in.”

“Nothing to worry about, Battalion Commander Zhou. Survivors are rare these days. We’ll help out if we can but our team doesn’t have a lot of people-there are even a few girls with us. To prevent unnecessary friction and misunderstanding in the future, there’s something I must say first.” Luo Yuan said coldly.

The man and the soldiers sneaked another glance at the lizard. The former smiled forcefully as he said helplessly, “Please, speak.” Luo Yuan went right ahead, “I believe your soldiers have high integrity and discipline. Since you guys intend to join us, I only have one condition - that is for you and your team to be disciplined and follow orders. If you can’t do that, you can go back to where you came from. Do you think you and your team can you do that, Battalion Commander Zhou?” Luo Yuan directed the question to the commander but was looking at all of them as well.

Zhou Yicheng closed his eyes and opened them a moment later. In an exhausted manner, he said, “This is what we should do. I understand.” He took a deep breath and turned towards the other soldiers to speak, “We’ve already come this far... Everyone’s tried their best. From this moment on... I’m no longer your battalion commander, and you’re all not soldiers anymore. You hear?”

“Yes.”

The replies were scattered. Some were firm while some sounded hesitant. Some of the soldiers even shed some tears. Luo Yuan took in the reactions. It did not matter whether they were genuine or acting. Regardless of their answers, how they acted in the future was far more important.

He turned towards Zhou Yicheng and asked, “I thought there were about a dozen of you? Why are there only 6?”

“Five of us are injured, and there are another two who have yet to return,” Zhou Yicheng said bitterly.

“Injured?” Luo Yuan asked.

Zhou Yicheng’s expression saddened as he knew that an injured member would be a complete burden to a surviving group. He could not gauge the attitude behind Luo Yuan’s tone and quickly said, “They can still walk. They’re the best soldiers! As long as... they rest for some time.”

“I think you’ve misunderstood me. Bring out the injured members. I can heal them when we return to our temporary shelter,” Luo Yuan said knowing what was on Zhou Yicheng’s mind.

“That’s wonderful!” Zhou Yicheng was ecstatic.

The other soldiers were delighted as well, and a few of the impatient ones were already going into the building to retrieve their injured comrades.

“As for the pair who has yet to return, give me their coordinates. I’ll go look for them,” Luo Yuan continued.

“Okay, great.” Zhou Yicheng was surprised and said, “Bring the map over quickly.”

Luo Yuan went out on his lizard but when he returned he only brought one person as the other had already died.

When he delivered the news, there was no extreme reaction other than silence. It was too common for them who have struggled in conditions no different from hell and survived.

The team departed quickly.

There was a total of 13 people-Luo Yuan and the 12 remaining survivors. This was nothing for the lizard as everyone fitted nicely on its broad back. Half an hour later, they made it back.

All the injured members were immediately carried inside the subway station.

“Prepare plenty of food and hot water. Is Chen Xianfeng not back yet?” Luo Yuan spoke while walking.

“He’ll most probably be back before lunch,” Cao Lin answered.

“Mm... let me know when you see him.” Luo Yuan then turned and spoke to Zhou Yicheng, “Everything is limited here but if you notice anything lacking or unsatisfactory do let me know.”

Zhou Yicheng sighed and said, “Sorry for the trouble.”

Luo Yuan waved, “You’re not taking me as one of your own if you remain so courteous. You can only do greater things once you’re all well fed and rested. Besides, there’s something I’d like to mention first. This area is just our temporary shelter. We’ll depart again after five to six days. At that point, you guys can decide whether you prefer to stay or leave with us.”

Zhou Yicheng quickly asked, “Brother...Brother Luo, where you are heading to?”

“It’s getting more and more dangerous here, especially since Jiangnan Province is near to the sea. The earlier we leave, the better the chances we have at surviving.” Luo Yuan then thought about the turtle and got into a trance. He had always had a bad premonition. The ocean made up 70% of the earth, and the amount of living creatures it contained would far exceed those on land. In addition to the length of time since the outbreak, they would have long evolved into much stronger entities in comparison to those on land. Once these creatures, or even just a small portion of them, moved towards the land, the ecology of the land would be destroyed without a doubt.

He snapped out of the trance and continued, "To the northwest, around Taklamakan. We've heard that they are reconstructing that area so it should be safer there." Zhou Yicheng did not reveal anything, but he asked, "Which route are you taking?"

"We'll take the state highway through Jiaping passing Anhui Province and Beihu Province. The deeper inside it is, the safer it will be." Luo Yuan had thought long and hard after staring at the map. Zhou Yicheng seemed to want to speak but hesitated. After a while, he decided to talk, "Why not through Hucheng City?"

Luo Yuan was startled. He realized from Zhou Yicheng's tone that he seemed to be hiding something. Luo Yuan said, "Is there anything you are not telling me? Or is there something you know?" Zhou Yicheng suddenly felt as though the sky had darkened and the air around him thickened. Breathing seemed to be a chore, and his heart lost a beat. What is happening? His steeled resolve allowed him to stay calm. His eyes were glancing around but could not notice a trace of strangeness. By now, his vision darkened, which was a sign that he was about to faint. Just as he felt like he was losing consciousness, the feeling disappeared all of a sudden, just like how it had come. "I'm sorry. I still can't control my aura." Luo Yuan said apologetically. It had happened quite a few times now in the past few days which made most people afraid to go near him.

Zhou Yicheng could not respond. He was gulping for oxygen like a fish out of water. He finally recovered after some time and said. "It's alright. I'm at fault for not being clear. This is not considered confidential now anyway." There was nothing else Zhou Yicheng could say. Whether the episode earlier was a threat or simply Luo

Yuan losing control, he ought to behave accordingly being under someone else's shelter. He arranged his words and spoke slowly, "You should know that the reconstruction area is China's last resort and final base to counterattack."

Luo Yuan nodded. Of course he understood. Countless of similar incidents had happened throughout history, and this was the result of exchanging space for time. The only difference between now and then is that the enemy used to be humans instead of mutated beasts.

"Yeah, this is the government's plan but everything happened too quickly. Who knew that the situation would worsen at such a rapid speed? There's no time to prepare at all." Zhou Yicheng said. He then continued, "According to what I know, despite a significant amount of construction work being done there, they have only completed phase 1 and 2. Sourcing for such large quantities of equipment and raw materials needed was not an easy task."

Hucheng City is the country's center for finance and technology. Its status is unparalleled in the whole of China. It is seen as invaluable since it developed labs containing a lot of advanced equipment. The country simply cannot and will not give it up. There are a few of such cities, and none of them have given up completely.

"How do you know? This type of information is highly classified. Its exposure could leave all survivors mad." Luo Yuan asked.

"One of the people in-charge of Hucheng City is my friend in

military school. He coded the message to me but that phone is destroyed now.” Zhou Yicheng changed his expression and told Luo Yuan seriously, “Send us to Hucheng City. I’ll bring you guys to the reconstruction area. A few additional people on a large aircraft would not be a problem.”

Chapter 169: Goal

“Mission: Level B Mission, send a group of soldiers to Hucheng City’s secret military base; Mission Requirement: Number of soldiers including Zhou Yicheng must not be less than 6 people; Time: 1 week.”

The system’s notification rang in Luo Yuan’s mind. He was a little stunned, not expecting the system to suddenly give out a mission.

He thought about it carefully. Zhou Yicheng did not look like he was lying about the fact that Hucheng City still had a secret military base. If Zhou Yicheng did not navigate them, they would not be able to find the base so he must stay alive.

The odd thing was the number of people required to be kept alive was rather lenient as there were 12 soldiers present. Level B missions were usually not too dangerous to Luo Yuan. He was quite excited to take the risk in exchange for a favor. It was worth it in his opinion. The only uncertainty was whether or not Zhou Yicheng would follow through on his promise. It was hard to tell, and the mission notification had no information on that. Should he follow his previous plan or take this risk?

Luo Yuan made his decision after a quick thought.

Hucheng City was nearby Jiaping-within 100 kilometers. This was a rare opportunity and he had to grasp onto it no matter how slim the chances might be. Even if it does not work out, he would

only lose a couple of days on his journey.

As for danger, there was nowhere that was not dangerous right now. Therefore, Luo Yuan was confident enough to accept a Level B mission.

Zhou Yicheng stared at Luo Yuan nervously. The latter's eyebrows were locked in a frown as he tried to maintain a straight face. Zhou Yicheng could not even guess his thoughts. When Luo Yuan's frown softened, it was more obvious that he had made his decision. Zhou Yicheng was instantly on edge.

"How sure are you?" Luo Yuan looked at him as he asked and then clarified, "I mean the part about having all of us on the plane."

He spoke slowly and tried to say it in a calm tone, but it brought a massive amount of pressure to Zhou Yicheng. What should have quickly come out of his mouth remained stuck in his throat. He thought over his words with care and finally said, "Honestly, not one bit. I haven't contacted my friend in a long time; I don't even know if he's still on duty. And even if he's still in the military, I'm not sure if he can persuade anyone. Also, this is extremely confidential, and we can't just enter even though we're on the same side... So, I'm not sure at all. It's up to you whether you're willing to take the risk. I can only say that I'll try my best and won't let you guys be ill-treated."

"Don't they also save survivors?" Luo Yuan asked.

Zhou Yicheng was shocked and took a wrinkled cigarette out from his pocket. He only started speaking after puffing the cigarette lightly, “The reconstruction area has long been built. Those who have heard of it would have heard of it ages ago. In addition to the massive migration by the country’s organizations, there’s at least one to two million people if not three to four million there. Those with high potential and talents made up most of the population there too. Food, necessities, work, resources, defense, etc. The government would already be having a hard time. If I’m politically incorrect, I would say the reconstruction area does not lack ordinary people. Of course, if all of you here are evolved people, there’s probably 50 – 60% hope, but I don’t think that’s possible.”

China has too many people. Taklamakan’s resources and space could never accommodate for so many people. Luo Yuan thought about it and finally sighed in reply, “This is just your assumption. I’ll try as long as there’s a slight chance.”

“You agree with the plan then?” Zhou Yicheng was more than excited. Luo Yuan nodded and replied, “This trip will be dangerous. You guys need to recover quickly and make some preparations. What weapons do you all need?”

“Are there guns? As long as there are guns we are good. My warriors have all come back from blood-soaked battlefields. I would not go so far as to call them sniper gods but they’re close. We’ve gone from more than four hundred people what we have left today. They’re all sharpshooters,” Zhou Yicheng spoke. His eyes were moist when he got to the end.

Although Luo Yuan had heard about it once, he was still shaken to hear about the hardships these soldiers had experienced. To be able to survive under such harsh conditions was incredible. Even their determination alone was enough to impress Luo Yuan. Those with weaker wills would have committed suicide by now. Huang Jiahui and Huo Dong's experiences were nothing compared to theirs.

“There are guns but not here. They're in the nearby fortification. Rifles, machine guns, snipers... I can get them all. If you guys can drive tanks, there's also one over there but I don't recommend it since the journey is mostly through the forest,” Luo Yuan said.

“We're not afraid of anything if we have these weapons.” Zhou Yicheng said in appreciation.

Then came a commotion.

“Shit, mutated beast!”

“It's a mutated human.”

“Everyone hide, quick!”

The soldiers all withdrew - some rolled to corners and most of them already had daggers in their hands ready to attack.

A human form creature about 10 feet tall filled with cuticles all over its body stepped into the subway station's foyer. It almost had

nothing human about it left, especially its face. Its cuticles seemed to serve as an armor to protect it.

To outsiders, Chen Xianfeng looked like a huge threat! His right hand held a skeletal bone that was about 2 meters long and had the width of a human thigh. It was still stained with blood and brain mush. His left hand dragged a three meter long and one-meter tall rodent-like creature. He looked exactly like a giant who had returned to his home after hunting.

Seeming to be disturbed by the situation, Chen Xianfeng's green eyes scanned the unfamiliar faces. His vicious, sharp teeth were bared for all to see and he looked like he was going to go berserk at any moment. But just as he was getting more restless, Luo Yuan's voice felt like a bucket of iced water poured down on him. Chen Xianfeng instantly took a few steps back and lowered his head.

“Chen Xianfeng, calm down. Put the food down,” Luo Yuan said.

Chen Xianfeng grunted in agreement and left the foyer.

“Brother Luo, this...this is?” Zhou Yicheng asked in shock.

“The result of failed mutation. Thankfully, his ability to reason remains.” Luo Yuan seemed to notice that Zhou Yicheng's was thinking about something as he continued, “He won't harm anyone with me around. He's really strong and we used to be on the same team. We'll see how it goes.”

Zhou Yicheng then swallowed his thoughts. Luo Yuan left a deep impression on him in just half an hour of them getting along. He was straightforward and no-nonsense. One could feel involuntarily pressured and submissive even when he is just speaking casually. Even the head of military did not impose such oppressive energy. If he could, he would not want to go near him at all.

“This person was undoubtedly the heart of this group-the ultimate center of its heart. A formidable hero who emerged out of the chaotic times.” Zhou Yicheng wondered inwardly. A large volume of water was boiled at that point. Jiaping City was a water village; streams were everywhere so water was not scarce at all. Huo Dong, Lin Xiaoji, and the few soldiers were carefully rinsing the injured members’ wounds.

Most of these wounds were old injuries-abscesses and maggots had already grown in most of them. Huo Dong and Lin Xiaoji frowned and felt nauseous, not knowing how or where to begin. One of the soldiers was disgruntled and said, “Let’s do it. Do you guys have a knife?”

“Yes, yes,” Huo Dong was a little abashed. He quickly pulled out his dagger and passed it over.

The soldier then heated the blade of the dagger in the fire and told the injured member to hold his breath. The latter nodded, “Come at me, the pain’s just momentary.” The soldier took a deep breath and poked the dagger lightly into the wound, slicing off the rotten flesh around it carefully. The action was gentle and smooth and only stopped when fresh red blood trickled down. The wound had now become a big hole, deep enough to see the injured

soldier's bones. He turned to Huo Dong and asked for some bullets.

“Are these enough?” Huo Dong asked as he passed over a bunch.

“The more, the better. We have a lot of injured members here.”

Huo Dong then took out another bunch of bullets.

The soldier noticed that Huo Dong's bullets were made of a weird material but did not comment.

The following scene was bloodcurdling. After some time, the injured soldier grunted and straightened his body, his forehead dotted with large droplets of sweat but he did not faint.

“Great, go on.”

The soldier's hand did not stop treating each abscess. Each cut was accompanied by a suppressed grunt as the injured soldier's body was adorned with another deep hole.

Huo Dong realized that his body already had a lot of similar holes-each of them looking like a baby's mouth. Huo Dong thought about it and asked, “Don't you all have bullets?”

“We do but not many. We can't waste them here. We have to use them in critical situations,” the soldier answered without hesitation.

Huo Dong sucked in a cold breath and walked away pulling a stunned Lin Xiaoji with him. He then said, "Are they machines? They can still walk with such serious injuries. I've seen fearless ones but I've never seen anything like this!" Lin Xiaoji was also shocked and replied, "Yeah, I heard they came from Hedong City as well. It's hard to imagine them being able to walk until here. I've also heard that a lot have died. They're all really capable though." Huo Dong sighed. It was already really difficult for him to come to this stage, flirting with death so many times now. But, he still owed his life to Boss Luo. He then asked, "What about the soldiers?" Lin Xiaoji continued his story, "There were a few hundred I guess. It's a battalion, it's gonna be several hundred regardless. But perhaps not all of them are as capable. If they were without guns, maybe they'd be wiped out within a second."

Huo Dong stared at Lin Xiaoji who looked serious. Huo Dong was trying to see if Lin Xiaoji was just making up stories but the more Huo Dong looked at him, the more repulsive he felt.

"What are you two doing sitting there? Come help!" Cao Lin shouted.

"I'm going to help," Huo Dong dusted his butt and walked towards them.

The beast was skinned and its stomach cut open and emptied. After some simple rinsing and cutting, everything along with its innards was thrown into the stone pot. The water was already boiling so cooked flesh and fatty parts could be seen floating. The aroma was enough to make anyone salivate. On instinct, all the

soldiers looked towards the pot and gulped. Even Zhou Yicheng did the same.

“The food smells so good,” a soldier could not help but utter.

“I think...I can drink a pot of soup tonight. The kind of big pot made from stone,” another soldier said while licking his lips.

“Oh please, I can eat as much as there is!” another soldier said.

“Everyone, control yourselves...,” a soldier reminded his comrades.

“Should I add the food cubes?” Wang Xianguang asked as she stirred the pot’s contents.

“We don’t have much left... but never mind, let’s add a little. Not too much, one-third is enough. Too much might end up harming them,” Huang Jiahui thought and said. They were left with 17 cubes now since the two beasts were being fed with green level food these few days.

These were precious resources and could save lives in critical situations. The consumption of each cube was made after much consideration but these people were too weak, they would not last the journey if they were not being nourished.

“I’ll go get it!” Wang Shishi left what she was doing and skipped towards the bag containing the cubes in a hidden corner. She took

a cube out and sliced a piece about a finger's size with a dagger before stuffing it into her mouth, looking like a content cat.

Honestly, these food cubes did not have much texture to them but they had some magic that kept pulling one back to eat it. Also, the warmth it brought was as good as the comfort one felt after taking a hot shower. This was the best tidbit for girls like her in this era without junk food.

She quickly proceeded to cut one-third of the cube and returned.

An indescribable aroma permeated the atmosphere around them once the small food cube was dropped into the pot. It smelled similar to the scent earlier yet it was different as it exuded a tempting fragrance that put people on edge. The few soldiers could not hold back anymore and crowded around the pot.

Chapter 170: Sea Level

The soldiers reluctantly returned to where they had initially been sitting after being chided by Zhou Yicheng, but their eyes never left the big pot.

Zhou Yicheng was rather embarrassed and remarked softly, “These rascals...”

Luo Yuan laughed and said, “It looks like you guys are starving, but please wait a bit longer. The rice is still not ready. Besides, all of you can take this time to tidy up.”

Zhou Yicheng quickly understood what Luo Yuan meant upon a quick glance at his appearance as well as his companions. They looked like beggars who rolled in mud. The worst part is that they all carried a strong stench with them. It was even to the point that they would find it difficult to swallow if they were to eat around people like them.

The soldiers abruptly went to clean themselves with the hot water that was prepared.

Amidst their shower, Chen Xianfeng came back with two small beasts and stayed in a corner. He was watching everything with his highly perceptive eyes. No one paid attention to him though, except for the soldiers, since the rest were used to him after so many days.

Going back to the food... Luo Yuan said there was rice, but it

wasn't rice grains or wheat flour. Those were either depleted or extinct in this era. The rice he was referring to was a type of mutated plant. Nobody knew what it was but it was round and the size of basketballs which had an exterior as hard as a shell along with thick roots. This was just its budding state though. Once grown, the shell would crack and grow into a small tree about 5 meters tall within a night. This was a result of survival of the fittest– the miracle of evolution in a race to continue the plant's lineage under harsh circumstances.

For it to grow into a 5-meter tall tree overnight, the ball-sized plant must contain a significant amount of starch, vitamins, and minerals. That was why it weighed almost 15 kilograms despite its size. Husking the shell of the plant would result in a ball that could last Luo Yuan and the gang up to 6 days. If it were properly preserved, its freshness could last up to a week. Besides, its texture was not too bad. It was smooth and sticky with a pleasant fragrance. Luo Yuan had accumulated lots of it once they discovered the plant. Too bad the plant was scarce and hard to find, so he only managed to find 12 of them after a long search.

“Rice” was ready soon enough and the soldiers devoured the food. They had been starving for a long time. Luo Yuan suspected that the soldiers would have eaten a lot more if not for the limited amount of food available. Not a grain of rice nor a drop of soup was left after just a few short minutes. The appetites of the injured soldiers were not affected by their injuries. Due to this, Luo Yuan only managed to get a small bowl of rice. The women were laughing at his utterly dejected expression.

After the meal, the soldiers looked as though they were high on drugs or alcohol. They had consumed way too much food. Their

bodies were malnourished and would have probably already given up on them if not for their sheer determination. The nutritious mutated food they just ate was akin to coming across an oasis in the desert.

Zhou Yicheng and his comrades could not understand their drowsiness. They assumed that they were sleep deprived for so long and could now finally relax. In a matter of moments, their heads were on the table, fast asleep and snoring.

Looking at the uncomfortable postures of the soldiers, Luo Yuan made the others give some of their tents up to allow the soldiers to have a better rest. He then took a food cube and went out of the subway station.

A long walk and a small tremor later, the giant lizard appeared in front of Luo Yuan.

The lizard seemed to be taken aback when Luo Yuan threw his food cube at it, but it quickly stretched out its neck and caught the cube, swallowing without bothering to chew it. It was very excited to see Luo Yuan, and as usual, it snuggled its head in Luo Yuan's chest.

Luo Yuan smiled and hopped onto the lizard. The creature sprinted into the distance under his instruction. The food cube was precious but time was even more so at this stage. The time set to complete the mission was a week. It was not exactly a long journey-only around 100 kilometers, but the soldiers needed to recover. Their two beasts as well! The giant lizard was doing better with at least 60% of its abilities now restored, but Lao Huang was

still seriously injured with a severe limp. Furthermore, the unpredictable dangers along the journey could cause all sorts of delays to the mission.

The faster their pet beasts can recover, the stronger their defense will be during the mission. Therefore, this was not the time to be stingy on the food cubes. The giant lizard's loyalty was now over the moon after being regularly fed food cubes by Luo Yuan. Although this could easily change at any time, it was undeniable that the lizard had become more obedient.

The giant lizard sprinted and howled across the city! Since there was no threat to it here anymore, it instinctively announced its authority... until Luo Yuan slapped it! The lizard then sadly shut its mouth.

The fortification at the sea bridge was 30 – 40 kilometers away from Jiaping City, but it was already in sight after some ten minutes of sprinting on the lizard. Luo Yuan suddenly felt the lizard slowing down as its steps got heavier. Immediately, he was alerted.

Luo Yuan observed his surroundings and noticed the strong wind and salty moisture in the air. The ground looked damp with traces of water seen occasionally.

“Traces of water?”

Luo Yuan was bewildered as it had not been raining.

He slapped the lizard again, and it stopped at once. Luo Yuan hopped off and studied the cement ground closely. Sands and stones were all around, but there was a layer of grayish white particles on their surface.

“It’s sea salt.” He thought to himself after tasting some.

He walked forward slowly with a face that was getting more and more serious over time. Some shell creatures appeared further in front. There were large ones like houses and small ones the size of fingernails. Some in striking colors and others were plain. Some were even dull like rocks. They were not only on the highway, but they were also in the farmland and forest.

As he moved forward, the numbers of creatures, he could see increased.

Suddenly, a sound came from the highway,

“ Cha – cha – cha.”

Three fierce looking crabs each the size of a water tank sped towards Luo Yuan from a corner. Not waiting for Luo Yuan to pull out his Zhanmadao, his giant lizard already leaped ahead and landed in front of the crabs. These crabs seemed to be lacking in the intelligence department as they began attacking without even analyzing their surroundings first.

With its mouth wide open, the lizard easily caught one of the

crabs and crushed it with its jaws, swallowing it along with its shell. Just as the other two wanted to flee, the lizard pinned one down with its claws and crushed it. It used its fire breath to attack the other one which was about to escape.

“Hong!”

The flame had a shape of a mushroom cloud and made a hole in the ground, burning the crab into ashes. Although the lizard had done well, Luo Yuan frowned. He pretty much understood the lizard’s behavior now that both of them had spent more time together. It was fine if the lizard attacked the three light blue to blue level crabs regularly but spewing fire was its least used attack because of a large amount of damage it had on itself. Each time it used this attack, it needed a few days to recover, so it was rarely used unless they faced a great enemy.

The lizard was acting strangely. It seemed rather anxious and too easily agitated. The only explanation for this behavior was that there was something else causing the lizard anxiety. Luo Yuan tapped the lizard’s back to comfort it and had it stay down to rest.

The lizard had not recovered from the battle. If there were a problem right now, it would certainly be an issue to them. Luo Yuan stayed down and ran towards the front. His actions were light and fast and seemed to be in a rhythm – looking like an agile leopard.

He avoided many shells that looked harmless, as well as some strange looking creatures. Mutated shells creatures were no longer the helpless things they were pre-apocalypse. Their movements

were quick now in addition to their strong defense. Battling them was difficult, especially when some could even spit corrosive acid.

Some shells hide actual danger underneath them. Luo Yuan noticed that one of the shells was open and out came a colorful sea snake that was extremely venomous! Fortunately, these could not cause much harm to Luo Yuan due to his evolved state. The further he got, the stronger the sea breeze and the harsher the waves. If he remembered correctly, there were no waves at all in the last few days. It seemed unlikely that the salt water under the sea bridge could cause such waves and affect the moisture in the air so drastically.

After 10 minutes, he was finally a little relieved when he got to the fortification. The structure was on the high ground, so the seawater had yet to seep in. Otherwise, all their weapons would have been useless by now. Luo Yuan did not enter right away but decided to go further forward.

A few minutes later, he arrived at the edge of the sea bridge. The bridge was more damaged now compared to a few days before. The parts of the sea were completely wrecked, with only a pier still standing strong in lonesome. However, he was not paying attention to this.

A borderless ocean greeted his eyes. What laid at the other end seemed like a mirage now under the effects of the water vapor. This bay that was parched a few days ago but is now full of seawater. Suddenly, a large whirlpool appeared in the water as a large shadow paddled across the surface. Luo Yuan subconsciously took a few steps back. When he got out of his daze, the beast was

gone without a trace, leaving his forehead drenched in sweat.

Although it was just a glimpse, the aura it brought was enough to cause palpitations. He dared not go nearer anymore, withdrawing several hundred meters away. He held onto the steel railing of the bridge and looked downwards, unable to suppress his curiosity. If his memory had not failed him, this should have been a large piece of saline land and not the sea that was less than 3 meters below the bridge. Luo Yuan did some calculations and realized that the coastline had to have pushed in at least 7 kilometers for this to happen.

The villages and hotels in his memories were engulfed by the seawater now. This bay was usually dry pre-apocalypse. Even during the few months of high tide, the water would only form a shallow layer, nothing close to the situation today. Moreover, factoring in the current time of year, high tide has not even begun so why was there such a phenomena?

Unless...

Luo Yuan suddenly thought of something and was horrified by his realization.

“Sea level... the sea level has risen! Damn it!” Luo Yuan mumbled to himself.

The global mutation and warming first affected the living creatures, and now it has reached the ice in north and south poles. Over time, they would only keep increasing until the glacier

formed a new balance with the current temperature.

The increase in sea level could only bring serious side effects. Most of the coastal areas would become part of the ocean. Jiangnan Province was averagely five to six meters above sea level, and this was including the mountains and hilly areas. The altitude would be lower if it were just flat land. Within a few years, the whole province would most probably be part of the ocean, leaving behind only a few deserted islands. As for Hucheng, its altitude is even lower with an average of 4 meters. Other than Dajinshan, most of the areas left were less than 4 meters above sea level. It seemed that these would no longer exist for long now.

Chapter 171: Resolved

Luo Yuan sincerely believed that they were already in hell, but the truth is that what laid before his eyes proved to be much worse. He could not imagine what the future would be like upon gazing into the distance. With the coastline coming inwards, numerous survivor bases built around the coastal area would be engulfed in water, leading to the inevitable deaths of its occupants. This much, he understood-the living environment for humankind would only get worse from here onward.

He went back to the fortification with sadness in his thoughts, collapsing into a corner with some force. He looked lost in thought, but his mind was empty. Luo Yuan looked up and noticed the sky had darkened. He snapped himself out of his trance and quickly tried to think of what to do next.

“Can’t wait no more. We have to leave here as soon as possible. Probably have to depart first thing tomorrow morning.”

For some reason, he had a premonition that the place would become immensely dangerous if they did not leave soon. He stood up and rummaged for the required firearms. Luo Yuan retrieved two sniper rifles, 18 rifles, along with a few boxes of grenades and bullets. He even found a dozen combat suits in the closet. The soldiers’ uniforms were ripped and worn out, so these were very handy.

With a whistle, the lizard came to him at the entrance looking troubled. It was grunting continuously. Luo Yuan comforted it and went out to chop a rattan. Skinning the bark off to make some

strong ropes, he tied the few boxes into a bundle and hung them onto the lizard's back.

When Luo Yuan got onto the lizard, it ran like a fleeing prey before its owner even gave out a command. Under the setting sun, Luo Yuan turned and looked towards the damaged sea bridge thinking this was probably the last time he would see it.

However, he suddenly stopped the lizard when they passed one of the streets. He jumped off and went to the side of a building. Pushing away some rattan which revealed a huge rock. Of course, it was easy for him to move the rock, so he pushed it away to enter a hole that was about a meter tall. The building was a supermarket, the one he had gone to a few days earlier which still had a group of survivors. Now that the bay was no longer existent, Luo Yuan felt obliged to notify them as a fellow survivor. This action was basic morality-the value that Luo Yuan held close to his heart.

It was up to them if they chose to listen or not. Luo Yuan was no longer affected by life and death after being through so much. He hurriedly got to the fourth floor where the survivors were hiding. The steel door that Luo Yuan damaged previously was already replaced with a new one.

He knocked on the door and asked, "Is there anyone here?"

His voice echoed in the quiet, empty supermarket.

"Don't be nervous, if you recognize my voice, I came here a few days ago," Luo Yuan continued.

After what felt like a long 10 seconds, there was finally a reply.

“Damn it, shut up. What do you want? Have you not taken enough? We have nothing else!” A person said in a suppressed voice, his tone laced with anger and anxiety. The man continued, “You’re too loud! It’ll cause us trouble! Everyone will die because of you!”

“Don’t talk to him! He’s bad luck. If he didn’t come in the other time, Xiaofeng wouldn’t have died. If he dares to come in, we’ll fight him!” Another person spoke in agitation followed by noises of commotion from the rest.

“That was him looking for death himself! Acting boldly and wanting to go out to have a look. Look what’s happened!” Another person said.

“It’s still him! If he didn’t come in, would Xiaofeng go out thinking it’s already safe? It’s all him, him him him!” Another raspy voice said.

“Quiet! Quiet! Are you guys only gonna stop when the devil comes?” Another person responded.

An argument broke out inside. Nobody knew that it was safe outside now, but even if they did, they would probably not come out. The fear of death had made them prefer the dark store and spoilt food rather than coming out and having a look for themselves.

Luo Yuan then became a bit hesitant, not sure if he should tell them the brutal truth. Perhaps ignorance was bliss, and they already knew they could not stay alive for long and were lying to themselves as having enough food was already a problem.

After much hesitation, Luo Yuan did not let the cat out of the bag. He merely brushed it off and warned them that it was getting more dangerous outside. He also added that he was leaving tomorrow and if anyone wanted to follow him they could meet him at Lanting subway station at 7 am.

Luo Yuan then elevated himself onto the lizard's back once more and sighed. He was uncertain of the number of people coming, but he was almost certain that the biggest possibility was that not a single one would show up.

“Why is he not back yet?” Huang Jiahui was getting anxious.

She looked at her watch, and it was already 5 pm! Luo Yuan had gone out since noon. She kept trying to prevent herself from thinking that something bad might have happened to Luo Yuan. She talked herself into believing that he would be okay since there weren't many beasts in Jiaping City now and Luo Yuan was very good at protecting himself.

“He should be coming back anytime now... maybe he got delayed by something,” Wang Xianguang comforted Huang Jiahui even though she was looking equally anxious.

“Should I go look for him?” Wang Shishi asked.

Huang Jiahui hesitated and shook her head, “Never mind, it’s almost nightfall.”

Zhao Yali did not speak, but her hands had an iron grip on her clothes.

The soldiers were still sleeping soundly with loud snores that echoed one another. They would probably not be able to wake up until the next day. The physical and mental exhaustion they endured required long hours of sleep to overcome.

The sky was progressively getting darker, and soon it was pitch black aside from the light from the fire in the subway station.

“Why don’t we eat first?” Lin Xiaoji asked while patting his already growling stomach. Their meal had been ready for some time now, and the rich collagen in the mutated meat would coagulate quickly and be hard to chew without healthy, strong teeth.

“If you’re starving, eat first. We’ll wait.” Huang Jiahui spoke softly.

“Then forget it,” Lin Xiaoji said. He had no guts to eat alone even though he had already been given permission.

Time passed slowly, and finally, heavy footsteps were heard

faintly in the distance. The sound got clearer as the ground quaked then stopped when it was near.

Huang Jiahui breathed a sigh of relief and stood up.

“It’s the lizard’s footsteps. Brother Luo is back!” Wang Shishi chirped.

“I’ll go reheat the dishes,” Cao Lin said joyfully.

Just as she finished speaking, Luo Yuan had already appeared at the subway station.

“Why are you so late?” Huang Jiahui chided.

“Some stuff came up.” Luo Yuan replied hastily and spoke to Huo Dong and Lin Xiaoji, “Don’t eat yet, move the firearms from the entrance here first.”

Huang Jiahui was still the one who understood him best, and as usual, she caught on immediately, “What’s wrong?”

“Sea bridge... The water level has risen a lot. I don’t know the actual situation, but I don’t have a good feeling about it. We can’t stay here anymore. We depart to Hucheng tomorrow,” Luo Yuan said.

“Will it be too rushed? Lao Huang hasn’t recovered.” Wang

Xiaguang spoke looking at the worried Zhao Yali.

“I’m concerned that it’ll be too late if we don’t leave tomorrow.” Luo Yuan sighed in reply.

Everyone was alarmed by this information. Things must have been severe judging from Luo Yuan’s expressions and words.

Luo Yuan looked at Zhao Yali who looked hesitant to speak. He told her gently, “You don’t have to worry about Lao Huang. I’ll feed it food cubes tonight, and it should be able to walk by tomorrow.”

The dinner was quiet with different thoughts running through everyone’s mind.

The comfort they experienced over the last three days had cleansed their gory and cruel memories. Thinking about having to go through new challenges and putting their lives at stake once more had everyone feeling particularly blue.

Zhao Yali cleaned the utensils quietly after their meal. She had been keeping to herself other than occasionally speaking to Wang Xiaguang. She felt out of place here. Luo Yuan observed her movements, and the familiarity of it brought back memories of when they rented a house together before the apocalypse happened.

She was somebody else’s fiancé then. Each time she wiped the

table during the summer, her unintended exposure of her fair skin would make Luo Yuan's heart beat faster. People thought she was too delicate, but it was only her being timid. She could clean the house to a sparkling state every day and make delicious meals, mastering each house chore to perfection. She was not used to holding a knife though, and her cuts often ruined the mutated meat. She was not used to firing guns either, and her bullet holes were often bloody and blunt. She was but an ordinary woman who took everything life threw her way with a tinge of naivety.

Luo Yuan sighed, asking her to head out with him after she finished wiping the table. Zhao Yali hesitated before following him out. Her expression remained cold as she asked, "What do you want?" Since the conflict, Luo Yuan had been cold and had not spoken to her for a long time. It made her bitter, and she resented him for it.

"I have something to tell you." Luo Yuan did not know where to start. He thought for a while and said, "I said the tide's risen at the sea bridge just now, but it's much worse in reality. The place had already become a borderless ocean. I don't know where the survivor group you were with had gone to but from the looks of it, I don't think it ended well for them."

Zhao Yali covered her mouth in shock. "My condolences if there's someone you know or were close to." Luo Yuan comforted her. "There's nowhere else you can go now." He added quietly in his heart.

Chapter 172: Deterioration

When Luo Yuan and Zhao Yali came back, the rest were already preparing to sleep. They still had three additional tents after giving two to the soldiers which were more than enough to accommodate the team of 8.

Chen Xianfeng was excluded, unfortunately, since no tent could fit him.

Before sleeping, Luo Yuan went to the corner with the food cubes and stood there pondering for a long time. Finally, he carried almost all the cubes outside, leaving only three behind. Under the moonlight, Lao Huang was seen curled up. Even after three days, its layer of fur was still very thin. It still had some obvious wounds, but these were no longer the bloody sight they used to be.

Hearing Luo Yuan's footsteps, Lao Huang's tensed muscles slowly relaxed. It lifted its eyelids to reveal a pair of shiny eyes but then slowly closed them again. It looked like a dying old dog. Luo Yuan went to him and opened the package containing the food cubes. Just as the smell floated to it, its eyes reopened like a pair of bright bulbs! It struggled to stand, but its broken tail wagged with joy. Luo Yuan chuckled slightly and thought, "Not even mutation could change a dog's behavior."

He threw ten cubes to Lao Huang, and his heart ached at the amount he invested as the energy from a food cube was enough to sustain everyone in the group aside Luo Yuan and Chen Xianfeng (as well as the soldiers), for a full day. On top of that, the high amounts of active energy it contained were highly nutritious and

could give a boost any living creature.

Other than the first day where Lao Huang subconsciously devoured so many food cubes, it only got to eat three over the last two days. Luo Yuan hoped they could help Lao Huang recover. It quickly ate the cubes along with the sand and stones around them. He then turned towards another direction and noticed that the lizard and Lao Huang did not stay in the same area as mutated creatures were far more territorial compared to humans. Two of the beasts were at least a kilometer apart.

When he returned, the package he brought with him was empty. The moon was covered by the clouds tonight, leaving a faint glow. Luo Yuan looked at the sky and sniffed the air. The moisture level was extraordinarily high tonight. He was worried that the weather might be bad the next day. Rain would not only slow them down but dampen their spirits as well. It would cause unnecessary trouble and danger would usually follow. It would be even worse if it were stormy as they had to go through the forest. Luo Yuan had no other resort and could only act accordingly.

Their journey might have to be delayed if it was stormy tomorrow. He frowned and sighed at the thought of this.

Entering the subway station, Luo Yuan intentionally stepped on the ground a little harder to silently notify everyone that he was back. He knew that a lot of them could not sleep peacefully without him around. Not just those close to him, Huo Dong and the rest too. The level of alertness in each survivor was unimaginable. Everyone's senses were enhanced by the situation.

Luo Yuan sat in meditation alone at the subway station's entrance as per usual. If he slept near the others with his current conditions, everyone would have been haunted by nightmares. If he could barely control his aura when he was awake, he certainly could not do anything about it when he was asleep. A slight shift in his mood could change his aura completely, especially if he had dreams. It would be worse if they were nightmares. All this was because Luo Yuan still could not completely control his strength after the recent level ups he experienced.

Aura was mystical indeed but what it was made of was nothing else but strong Will and Sense – Will was for strength while Sense was required to support that strength. Those with weak Will would still look inferior when they put on a tough front, but those with strong Will would create a field of pressure around them even if they stood completely still. Therefore, controlling one's Will meant controlling their aura and meditation was the best method that Luo Yuan could think of to achieve just that. Of course, without the necessary skills to control it, his aura would be unrefined, and its aggressiveness would only be for show making his knife skills the perfect cure to refine his aura.

The night passed serenely and the next day, Luo Yuan who was half asleep in his meditative state, opened his eyes feeling palpitations. The surroundings were silent and only insects could be heard. The sky had yet to brighten as it was only 4 am. The night had been unexpectedly moist, and his hair felt wet. He wiped his face dry of the moisture and looked at the sky. Gloomy clouds present were a sign of heavy rain.

He stood up and straightened his slightly numb legs. He then proceeded to walk towards a nearby building with his Zhanmadao.

It could be seen that the building was a high-class office tower pre-apocalypse since it was still 12 stories high when part of it had already crumbled. This was the highest vantage around.

The inside of the building was severely damaged though, with a lot of the cement gone along with a few twisted steel fixtures visibly poking out. All these did not hinder Luo Yuan from entering. Where there were no stairs, he jumped; where there was no floor, he ran along the wall. Using steel fixtures and broken parts of the building, he went through the entire building quickly.

His 14-point Dexterity allowed him to treat the building like a parkour playground-with movements that exceeded the agility of a monkey was more gentle than a cat. Less than 2 minutes later, he was already at the top of the building looking towards the horizon. The sky was still dark that even with Luo Yuan's vision, he could not see much in the distance. He waited patiently for the sun to come up but still could not spot anything unusual, making him question himself about the palpitations earlier.

Luo Yuan returned without an answer. When he got back, everyone else except the soldiers who were still in a deep sleep was already awake and packing their things.

“Should we wake them up?” Huang Jiahui asked.

Luo Yuan looked at the time and said, “It's only 5 am now, we will leave at 7. Let them sleep for another hour!”

“What's up with your neck?” Luo Yuan asked once he noticed

some pale swelling on her neck when Huang Jiahui turned around.

“I just wanted to mention it. Water seemed to seep in here. The tent was wet when I woke up,” Huang Jiahui said while frowning as she touched her neck.

“Where? Let me have a look,” Luo Yuan quickly said.

The tent was already packed, so Luo Yuan went to where Huang Jiahui had her tent assembled last night, and without having to look closely, he could see that the area had already been drenched with a pool of water. Maybe the floor was cracked, so the water seeped through here as the other spots were dry.

He tasted some of the water with his index finger. It was seawater! He realized that his previous assumptions were wrong. Some of the lower grounds were already affected by the high tide. If it were the peak of flood season, the tide would have already engulfed the entire Jiangnan Province. The time it would take for this to happen would not be long. The best case scenario would be half a month, and if it was the worst case scenario, it could be merely a few days.

Then came Huo Dong... His voice was laced with fear and hopelessness, “Boss Luo, come quickly. Look what’s outside!” Luo Yuan’s heart almost flipped! He quickly went out with his Zhanmadao with the rest of the group trailing behind him. He subconsciously took a deep breath when he looked upwards. From where he was standing, it looked as though countless of black dots covered the sky and formed a black slab flying over from the far front. It covered almost half of the skies above.

The sheer amount of the many dots was causing numbness to his head. These were flying creatures, and they were not even of the same breed or species. There were birds, insects and even beasts that mutated with wings. Some of them were probably prey to others but right now, all of them were flying in the same direction. The volume of their loud chirps got louder as they got nearer to where Luo Yuan and his team had assembled. These noises were strung out, sounding like they were wailing loudly.

They were fleeing.

Half an hour later, the black dots in the sky passed the subway station - leaving a floor full of feces that disturbed many people. Luo Yuan said grimly, "We can't wait anymore. Wake everyone up, we leave immediately after eating." If the area in front was flooded, this flight of fleeing creatures could very well be just the first wave judging from their speed. It meant that Luo Yuan and his entire team would have to face the next wave of beasts. They had to leave as soon as possible or face death.

The soldiers were all called up. Most of their energy was restored now that they had slept for over 10 hours. They looked much better than the previous day, with color returning to their faces. To save time and quicken their journey, Luo Yuan gathered everyone and briefed them about his analysis as well as the brutal truth they had to face. Everyone's expressions changed as they listened intently.

Chapter 173: Departure

“I’ve brought back firearms and new clothes, distribute them later,” Luo Yuan told Zhou Yicheng. The latter agreed instantly and turned to go towards the weapons.

“Hold up... How’s the recovery of your injured members?” Luo Yuan halted him.

“They are much better now. Most of their wounds have already formed scabs. They’ll be fine as long as their wounds don’t come in contact with water,” Zhou Yicheng replied after thinking.

“I’m afraid it’s gonna rain today,” Luo Yuan shook his head in reply.

“I can only hope they push through then.” Zhou Yicheng replied and continued. “Time waits for no man.”

Luo Yuan said nothing when in actuality, he had a better solution for their wounds– life absorbency using his Zhanmadao. It was pretty useless in battles, but an immediate effect could be seen on these types of external wounds if they held his weapon. However, this was one of his secrets and the soldiers were not fated to be on his side yet. Furthermore, they had to part ways when they eventually arrive at the military base.

An excellent blade, especially one that could cut steel like soil and carried magical powers, would spur greed. Besides, things would change then. They would side as they had a favor to ask for. No

matter how strong he was, he would be helpless under such circumstances.

It was not that he was unwilling to part with his weapon, but as a swordsman, the Zhanmadao was already part of him. He knew the Zhanmadao's every secret and the blade was akin to an extension of his arm under the immersion of his Will. It would be dangerous for him to lose the Zhanmadao in the apocalypse as his capabilities would be hindered as well. Luo Yuan sighed as he knew he had to act accordingly.

He went out to check on Lao Huang. Compared to yesterday, its recovery was noticeable. The scabs were coming off to reveal fresh skin, and it was walking around so at least there would be no problems for it to walk later. Meals had already been prepared when Luo Yuan returned.

They were about to depart after a quick bite, but a few kids suddenly appeared at the entrance. These were three bony children not unlike those African refugees are seen on TV-their cheeks sunken and eyes hollowed. The oldest ones looked about 13 while the youngest one looked about 11 or 12. Their skin was covered in dust, but it could be seen that they were fair. They looked at everyone timidly-the smallest one even clung onto one of the older kids. Their eyes remained squinted as tears rolled down their faces. Their tear tracks were very evident on their dirty faces.

“Who are you and why are you here?” Wang Shishi asked bossily seeing that they were children.

“Some...somebody asked me to come here.” The tallest one, who

is also the boldest one, forced the words out, “They said we could find food here.”

Luo Yuan had a good idea where they were from now. He signaled Wang Shishi to stop asking questions and instead asked the children, “Why are there only three of you? Where are the rest?”

“They don’t want to come. Those people only sent us. The other option would be starving us to death,” the boy toughened up and said with hatred evident in his eyes.

Luo Yuan sighed inwardly. It seemed that those people had little food remaining; chasing these orphaned kids away would have to be the last resort to save some food.

“Those bastards!” Huang Jiahui muttered. “Come here. What are your names?”

“I’m Deng Wei, thank you big sister,” the boy who spoke earlier said sweetly.

“I’m Chong Chuqiang, thank you too big sister.”

“Chen...Chen Jiayi, thank you.” The kid who had her head lowered all the time lifted her head briefly before lowering it again.

“Shishi, bring them something to eat.” Luo Yuan knew Wang

Shishi had the habit of munching on tidbits and would always keep something in her bag. Her mouth never stopped chewing when they had nothing to do.

“Okay.” Wang Shishi hummed in reply and opened her bag to pass some meat jerky about the size of chicken eggs. “This meat is very hard, and you can only eat it by tearing them into small pieces.”

No one appreciated her friendly reminder as they were all famished. The kids quickly munched on the jerkies once they got their hands on them then swallowed the meat whole when they realized they could not chew them. They almost choked themselves.

“Okay, let’s go!” Luo Yuan said and looked at the time. He then whistled.

The giant lizard appeared in front of everyone in an instant, scaring the children for a moment. The tallest, Deng Wei, almost lost his footing while the smallest girl was almost in tears again but kept it in, gripping onto Chong Chuqiang who was next to her.

Huang Jiahui noticed their reaction and went over to comfort them, “Don’t be scared. This lizard is our pet.”

“It...it won’t eat people?” Deng Wei asked in stutters.

“Hmph, the giant lizard is very friendly. It never eats people.

We'll be riding on its back later." Wang Shishi boasted when she saw them scared.

"Its...its back?" Deng Wei asked, while noticeably about to cry. He continued, "Can I not ride on it?"

"Of course not. Unless you can run faster than the lizard." Wang Shishi pouted. These children were timid. They had been living in the dark supermarket all along and probably had never seen even the lowest level of mutated beasts, so it only made sense that they felt as if they were in hell when they faced such a situation. However, this was not the end. They went through the terror again when Chen Xianfeng came back. After some time, the children finally recovered a little from the trauma when they were dragged onto the lizard's back by Huo Dong. This scene would probably be etched in their minds until the day they die.

The team finally departed. It was a little crowded on the lizard's back with more than 20 people on it. One could easily slip off if not careful. Because Lao Huang was still rather weak, Luo Yuan made the lizard walk at a slow pace.

Not an hour later, rain started trickling down on them. The group had been prepared for it, so they moved forward without stopping. The further they got from Jiaping City, the harder the roads were to walk on as most of the roads already became part of the forest.

The trek only got better when they got to the highway near noon. Amidst the journey, another wave of escaping flying creatures flew by, stirring fear in their hearts but also instilled a sense of urgency

in everyone. They could no longer think about lunch with the hurry they were in, but they were forced to stop less than an hour later.

The in front of them was broken. The highway had crumbled and the damage was several hundred meters long. Nothing could be seen beyond that due to the limited vision they had from the effects of the rain. However, everyone expected that it would probably be worse if not the same.

Luo Yuan analyzed the situation and then instructed his team, “Let’s rest at the fortification in front. We leave after eating.”

The rain did not stop and by the looks of it, it would only get heavier. Water had already seeped into the fortification and the wooden beds were all damp. After some searching, Huo Dong found a decayed wooden mop handle to start a fire.

Luo Yuan went out and came back with two low-level beasts. The women prepared them for cooking and threw them into the pot. The fire danced from the strong wind as the three children leaned as closely as possible to the fire but that could not stop them quivering from the cold. Being polite, they made no noise.

Huang Jiahui stroked their heads and realized they were feverish. Their bodies were weaker than ordinary people due to malnutrition and it would be a surprise if they did not fall ill from being under the rain.

Huang Jiahui signaled something to Luo Yuan and he nodded.

She then took a food cube out from her bag and cut one-fifth of it into the pot after some thought. Not a moment later, the strong aroma permeated the air again as the soldiers were once again attracted to the cooking pot. Zhou Yicheng and his battalion knew something was weird about the food cube but they did not bring it up.

Luo Yuan checked the map and sighed again. There was no better route than the one they were on. Other routes like the state highway was probably a forest covered with mutated plants by now. After lunch, the three children looked much better with their fever subsiding. In fact, they looked rather high-spirited, probably from the food cube.

Luo Yuan decided that they should depart at once seeing that everyone had recovered.

Soon, the collapsed area was 6 – 7 meters away from them with dense bushes under it. From above, pieces of cement and rusty steel fixtures could still be seen. These were signs that the collapse happened recently and it certainly wasn't good news.

It meant that if the fall were not of natural causes, the real cause would not be far from them. He looked downwards and jumped after a short hesitation. He had been prepared for danger when they departed and there was no choice now anyway. It was simple; if they did not advance, they die.

Chapter 174: Tiger Headed Flood Dragon

The soldiers were amazed as they watched Luo Yuan jump down from such an incredible height. They even witnessed him landing on a slab of cement and walking away without a limp or scratch.

The creatures in the surrounding area were affected by the sheer force of the Zhanmadao and fled the area. Those that were too slow froze and dropped to the ground. Without even trying, Luo Yuan had successfully scared away most of the low-level beasts in the vicinity.

The bushes around the area were quite short since they had emerged from the ground that was previously covered in cement. However, they all looked healthy and strong as if they had been growing for years.

There was only one type of rattan, and it was rare to find. The plant was fine like chopsticks and had scale-like patterns growing on it. It was incredibly tough and did not break even when Luo Yuan pulled on it with great force. It could surely withstand the full weight of a human body.

Luo Yuan gathered some of the rattan and chopped them using his Zhanmadao before tying them together to form a rope about 10 meters long. Luo Yuan checked the rope and decided to make another knot on the weakest link before pulling on it again to check for safety. He then tied one end to a rock and threw the other end towards the highway.

“Climb down the rope and be careful.” Luo Yuan said.

The children went down first. They were tied to the rope and were lowered slowly towards Luo Yuan. Then, Huang Jiahui and the other women went down. They were followed by Huo Dong and the rest. The last to come down were the soldiers.

Luo Yuan secretly counted the time taken to complete the whole process. He started counting from the moment Huang Jiahui grabbed onto the rope to the second Chen Xianfeng landed. They took a good half an hour to complete the descent. However, the soldiers had more people. Most of them were already weak, and some of them were still injured, yet they were faster in their descent; taking less than three minutes. This emphasized the difference between the highly disciplined soldiers and Luo Yuan’s group of amateurs.

Regardless of their abilities, they were unrivaled in both discipline and obedience. As the physique of these soldiers improves, their attack power which came from their training would increase several folds. However, Luo Yuan was only an ordinary citizen before the apocalypse. Forming a group was never his intention. He only wanted to save as many lives as he could. It was more practical for him to level up his abilities than to hope for the group to increase their attacking powers from being disciplined. If the next place they went to were better, perhaps they would not need to suffer like this anymore.

Luo Yuan noticed the lizard pop its head to look down. He quickly urged everyone to move away seeing that it was going to jump. Space was created in an instant as everyone quickly

scrambled away. The group observed in fear as the lizard landed onto the ground with a loud thump. Its gigantic size cracked the cement and caused a minor tremor.

“Brother Luo, how did you manage to get your hands on this pet? I might want to own one too in the future.” Zhou Yicheng asked in astonishment. If the military could have an army of war beasts, it would no doubt be of great help in their current situation.

“Challenge it and win!” Luo Yuan turned towards him and said. He then continued, “Clever beasts fear death. However, you could also cultivate it from young. The best would be mutated beasts that evolved from dogs as they are intelligent and loyal. I assume the military already have trained canines. Experience in this matter could be very useful if they evolve.”

Luo Yuan already knew what Zhou Yicheng was thinking; he did not plan to keep it a secret as there was no such need. If he could notice, the country would have been able to notice it too. Besides, it was evident as Zhou Yicheng laughed to cover-up feelings exposed by Luo Yuan’s gaze. He said, “Military canines would be hopeless for me. If I see a dog, I would feel like eating it, and the dogs would want to bite me whenever they see me.”

“It’s better not to talk about this again.” Luo Yuan suddenly uttered.

“Why?” Zhou Yicheng asked.

“We have a dog here.” Luo Yuan replied.

Just as he finished, Lao Huang jumped down! It unintentionally glanced at Zhou Yicheng and growled fiercely.

“You consider this a dog?” Zhou Yicheng stuttered, his ears were numb from the loud growl.

The pressure that came from such a beast was intense. In reality, Lao Huang was already far from being a dog after the mutation. In comparison to dogs, its mouth and nose were much wider. Even the proportion of its facial features was adjusted; its limbs were sturdier and stronger, and its muscular and thick body looked nothing like a canine's. If it still had its fiery fur, Lao Huang would look more like a lion than a canine. A super lion, in fact!

“Battalion Commander, there is something up there,” a soldier seemed to have discovered something. Zhou Yicheng quickly ran over, and Luo Yuan followed.

It was half of a bridge pier, lying in the bushes. Ordinary people would probably not pay much attention to it, but various clues could be seen in the eyes of a professional. The soldier quickly said after noticing everyone had gathered, “I suspect...I suspect that a mutated beast did this. Its body should be long, like a snake.”

Luo Yuan carefully observed and touched the surface. His expression changed, and he became serious. The force necessary to break a 2-meter-diameter pier would have to come from an extraordinary beast. Even the giant lizard might have to run into the pier a few times to break it, and that was already assuming it

could break the bridge pier in the first place.

He immediately spoke, “Find out if the other piers have been damaged similarly.”

The soldiers looked at Zhou Yicheng and did not move. They did not want to upset their leader even though Luo Yuan was very intimidating. Zhou Yicheng urged them, “Brother Luo’s order is my order, go now!”

Luo Yuan waved his hands as if he was not bothered by such petty things like this. Soon, new piers were found. There were 6 of them in the area. Excluding two that were broken from the pressure, the rest all had similar patterns on them.

Luo Yuan hesitated for a minute but decided to continue moving forward. The second collapsed bridge pier was only a few hundred meters away; the party would arrive within minutes. Their hearts sank when they noticed the same pattern that they previously found on the piers.

He did not bother to check anymore as he was getting familiar with what had happened. He was almost sure that they were all destroyed by the same beast. They were fortunate not to have met any danger along the way-not even a light blue or blue level beasts appeared. It seems that all the mutated beasts in the region had long fled.

This only made Luo Yuan more cautious; his heart was pounding faster as they got nearer to the last chasm. Right at this moment,

the giant lizard shook its head in anxiety, and its steps became hesitant; Lao Huang even took a few steps back, making threatening howls.

Luo Yuan immediately had the lizard lay low and had everyone calm down.

The impending danger had everyone high on alert. Huo Dong and the others were no longer the rookies they had been. They prepared themselves for battle with weapons in their hands despite the fear in their hearts. Even Zhao Yali was holding her pistol

After a long wait, nothing seemed to happen.

“Brother Luo, why has it not appeared yet?” Wang Shishi could not help but ask in a soft voice after waiting for over 10 minutes.

“Don’t divert your attention.” Luo Yuan glared at her and spoke, “Stay here and keep your eyes peeled. I will go over and check.”

He sprinted and disappeared before Huang Jiahui could stop him.

Within a few minutes, he returned with something that looked like an unusually long mutated beast in his hands. It was about a meter wide while its length could not be estimated since they could not see it clearly with the bushes blocking their view. Everyone was shocked by what they saw. The kids became paralyzed with fear, but when they observed carefully, it was only skin.

Luo Yuan tossed the skin onto the ground - it was extremely light. The lizard stepped back at first but went nearer to sniff it; its front claw came forward to stomp on it. Luo Yuan quickly chased it away after he noticed how it was spoiling the skin.

“Brother Luo, could those marks be due to the creature that left this skin behind? Cao Lin dared not go near it. Even if it was just skin, it exuded an aura that caused fear and frenzy in her heart.

“It must be. Otherwise, it wouldn’t have broken so many piers. This beast was probably a snake; it would have been a jiao in ancient times.” Huo Dong was rattled too, coming forward for a closer look but quickly taking steps back when he thought the snakeskin came alive. He said, “Oh it’s spooky, looks exactly like a living thing.”

Huo Dong was right; this was a Flood Dragon. Flood Dragons were creatures that came from myths; the Chinese related it to a dragon whenever it was mentioned. The word appeared in ancient times but it was a dragon-snake hybrid; a snake nonetheless.

This time, it was a Flood Dragon. The name was, ‘Tiger-Headed Flood Dragon.’

“Skin of the Tiger-Headed Flood Dragon”

“Rarity: Light Green”

“Weight: 30 kg”

“Attribute: None”

“Additional Abilities: Weak Dragon Aura, Force Offset”

“Remarks: The Tiger-Headed Flood Dragon is a natural overlord on land at the top of the food chain. Even its molted skin emits a weak dragon aura to proclaim its power. Any attacks landing it will be weakened three-fold due to the skin’s Force Offset ability.”

Chapter 175: Big Trouble

Luo Yuan tried to cut the molted Flood Dragon skin with his Zhanmadao but could not even pierce it. He noticed that the blade would just slip off the skin whenever force was applied. However, once he used he utilized the inherent power of his Zhanmadao, even the defense of the skin could not prevent the blade from penetrating it.

Huo Dong and the rest were dumbfounded by the skin's ability to protect itself. They knew that in addition to Luo Yuan's Agility and Earth Stomp ability, he also possessed another mysterious power that he used to combine materials of different objects. The skin possessed a unique kind of defense. They knew what type of blade the Zhanmadao was. It could cut through steel like it was tofu, yet it could not even slice or pierce the Flood Dragon's skin. This skin would make the best material for armor, and Luo Yuan could synthesize it without much difficulty.

Most of them were still wearing the tough jacket made from the Haunted Locust Tree from Hedong City. After numerous battles, their jackets were torn and worn out; scratches and cracks appeared in several spots. They could only stare in envy at the semi-transparent bulletproof tops that Luo Yuan and the other women were adorned with. The membranous fluid from the turtle used to make the semi-transparent tops was limited. Luo Yuan could only make five bulletproof tops, and only one of them was classified to be a dark blue level armor. Luo Yuan was no saint; only a few women in his team was allowed to wear it. Unfortunately, Cao Lin had been excluded.

In the past, nobody dared say anything as they knew their

relationship with Luo Yuan was not as good as those women. However, now that Luo Yuan has obtained such a large piece of Flood Dragon skin, Huo Dong and Lin Xiaoji seemed to be hopeful. With sufficient materials, Luo Yuan might be able to synthesize enough tops for everyone including them. Both of them stared at Luo Yuan as they observed him rolling the Flood Dragon's skin into a bundle and tucking it away in his bag.

Lin Xiaoji had many questions in his mind and could not wait to ask them, but Huo Dong pulled him back forcefully and gave him a stare along with a warning in a hushed voice, "They're on different sides than us; be careful what you say." Being chastised without reason, especially by Huo Dong; Lin Xiaoji was furious. Just as he was about to retort, Luo Yuan's stared at him, and all of his words seemed to have disappeared along with his anger.

Huo Dong let out a sigh of relief in his heart. The boy was incredibly dense as he had never stepped foot into society before. Boss Luo has always acted generously, almost like a saint; but it would be a fatal error to mistake him for one. Huo Dong had witnessed more than ten killings by Boss Luo thus far. After a while, even he did not feel much guilt anymore from killing people; which was probably more so for Boss Luo. If any of Luo Yuan's limits were challenged, he would certainly become vicious and kill anyone who got in his way. His limits would probably include the women who were traveling with him, his world views or matters which he feels the need to keep a secret as well as his privacy. Huo Dong giggled sarcastically and said to himself, "Why am I always cleaning this idiot's mess?"

The journey ahead was unexpectedly smooth; no danger had presented itself other than a few low-level beasts. "At this rate, we

should be able to reach Hucheng City before nightfall.” Zhou Yicheng said after some rough calculations. The lizard had picked up its speed after they got onto the highway, so it was traveling at approximately 30 kilometers per hour making the journey a breeze.

“Hopefully.” Luo Yuan replied as he looked at both sides of the highway. The torrential rain had subsided momentarily but soon continued to pour down heavily. The rivers became clogged, flooding the surrounding areas. Within just a few minutes, the water was already half a foot deep; the world was slowly turning into an ocean.

If the flood here were already this severe, Hucheng City would be much worse by now. The poor disposal management of rubbish and corpses would cause the city’s sewage system to stop functioning. In fact, if the rain did not stop by tomorrow, the entire city would be submerged in water at this time tomorrow.

The children were well-behaved throughout the journey. They didn’t cry or throw any tantrums. Even the youngest, Chen Jiayi, was quiet. The sheer brutality of the apocalypse had forced them to cope with the current harsh conditions despite their young age. This type of discomfort was nothing compared to their misery when they were starving in the supermarket.

“Little Yuan, can we stop for a bit? I would like to find something to shade them from the rain.” Wang Xiaguang asked Luo Yuan as she felt sympathetic for the small children.

“Big sister, we don’t need it. We don’t feel cold at all.”

“The food we ate in the afternoon is still warm in our tummies!”

Deng Wei and Chong Chuqiang said immediately. The children were afraid that these people would chase them away for wasting their food and only being a burden. The meal they had eaten had been the most memorable meal of their life. They had never been as full as they were today ever since the apocalypse had begun. If they were chased away for being useless, they would probably never have a chance like this again.

“Hold it in for another two hours, we’ll rest for the night once we reach Hucheng City,” Luo Yuan said after looking at the time.

“They’re still so young, how do you expect them to endure it when they’ve just caught a fever in the afternoon?” Wang Xianguang snapped when she noticed Luo Yuan being so cold.

“It won’t take much longer,” Huang Jiahui added.

Zhao Yali kept quiet, but her facial expression showed her dissatisfaction with Luo Yuan’s decision as well. Fear could be seen all over the children’s faces as they watched the adults argue over them. Chen Jiayi could no longer hold in her tears but dared not make any noise, so she cried silently.

“Alright, we’ll stop for a short while,” Luo Yuan said helplessly.

He did not mean to be cold. He had experienced a similar reaction

from Wang Shishi before. Wang Shishi felt insecure and was afraid of being dumped as well. She had been so eager to help to secure her place that she even snatched Huang Jiahui's house chores to be of some help. Luo Yuan could not help but giggle thinking about it now. Luo Yuan knew that too much concern for the kids would only burden them mentally and make them feel even more insecure. Sufficient amounts of hardship and labor would allow them to feel much better by contributing. Of course, he could not have said this in front of the kids.

When the giant lizard stopped, Luo Yuan took out an extra piece of fish skin from his luggage. Wang Xiaguang snatched it from him angrily and carefully placed it over the children's heads but failed to notice that the children only became even more uneasy.

"There's supposed to be a bridge in front," Huo Dong suddenly said.

"Did you say bridge?" Luo Yuan asked to make sure.

"I used to pass by this road frequently when I was still working. I could even find it with my eyes closed." Huo Dong replied as he came to realize that the sea bridge was already ruined and the same thing might have happened to the bridge he was talking about earlier.

"There's a river here!" Zhou Yicheng said after looking at the map shielded in plastic carefully. The river was small, and if they did not pay close attention, nobody would have noticed a small bridge that stretched across it. It posed a serious problem now especially when there is a flood. Luo Yuan closed his eyes to think.

He opened them soon after and said, “Hopefully it’s still intact, or we will be facing big troubles ahead.”

Chapter 176: Fury

Suddenly, a shadow appeared in the water under the highway. Turbulence soon followed as the murky water turned red with blood oozing to the top.

“It couldn’t be a fish, could it?” A soldier asked in shock.

“It should be. We came across something similar the last time there was heavy rain. The river must have overflowed now so there could be plenty of fishes in the puddles,” Huo Dong said numbly.

“It was about half a month ago, wasn’t it? Luckily, we were on the hill then, but we still lost about ten people.” Zhou Yicheng said, his face carried a mixture of expressions. The other soldiers’ eyes were red, and they quickly wiped them. Due to the rain, no one could tell if those were tears or raindrops.

Zhao Yali gripped onto her clothes tightly. Her face turned pale as she listened. No one said anything more after that.

Huang Jiahui looked at Luo Yuan wiping his Zhanmadao lightly with a piece of mutated skin. He kept repeating this action again and again. She knew it was a sign that he was nervous. After being together for so long, she had become very familiar with his actions. She sighed and put her arm around his. Luo Yuan turned and comforted her in a gentle voice when he took in her worried expression, “Everything will be alright.”

The lizard continued advancing for another 10 minutes before it slowly came to a stop. As expected the bridge was damaged, and the only trace of its existence were the steel cables lying helplessly in the river. It was not exactly accurate to call it a river since the riverbank was long gone now. The puddles and river had merged to form a murky sea.

Luo Yuan suddenly spoke after standing at the edge of the broken bridge for a while, “Bring over the rattan.” Zhou Yicheng took the rattan and came over saying, “Rivers around this width are usually around three meters deep, but with the flood, this river’s probably five to six meters deep now.”

“Hopefully it doesn’t exceed 6 meters, or the water would cover the lizard’s back,” Luo Yuan said grimly. As he spoke, he threw the end of the rattan tied with a rock into the middle of the river and pulled. He was trying to estimate the angle it created to determine the depth of the water.

He did a rough estimation and felt his heart sink. He then tested it a few times around different spots, but after every attempt at calculating the depth, his expression got darker. Based on his attempts at measuring its depth, although the river looked narrow, it was incredibly deep. The deepest end probably reached 6.6 meters, and the shallowest end was around 4.8 meters. The highest point of the lizard was only 6.3 meters while its lowest point was 5.9 meters. This meant they would be submerged in the water during certain parts of the trek through the river.

Zhou Yicheng was not as good as Luo Yuan in estimating the depth, so he asked anxiously as he saw his dark expression, “How

is it?”

“Not good. The water is rather deep. It’ll be quite dangerous for us.” Luo Yuan then explained the issue between the height of the lizard’s back and the depth of the river.

Zhou Yicheng was familiar with the dangers that lurked in the water, but he said, “It won’t be any safer if we switched to another route. Besides, we’re so close to Hucheng already. Let’s take this risk.” Both Luo Yuan and Zhou Yicheng briefed the group about the situation. No one protested despite the depressing atmosphere.

Seeing such low spirits, Zhou Yicheng suggested, “Let’s sing a song before we depart.”

“Battalion Commander, forget it. We’ve been singing these songs all the way,” a soldier said.

“I don’t want to sing those old songs either, let’s sing something nice!” Another soldier said after licking his lips.

“What is this? Are you guys still soldiers? Sing! We must sing! We must show our spirit in singing! Show our military spirit!” Zhou Yicheng bellowed and continued, “Let’s sing ‘Soldiers Belong to the Battlefield’ for them!”

Then he began singing:

“There’s an unspoken rule; warriors belonged to the battlefield,

Tigers should stride amidst forests; dragons should turn ocean around,

Who's without a father, who's without a mother..."

Zhou Yicheng was quite bad at singing. His voice was rough, and he was a little tone-deaf. He was singing alone but before long, the other soldiers began to follow his tune. More and more slowly chorused and in the end, even Huo Dong and Lin Xiaoji were humming to the song.

Luo Yuan watched silently but felt touched.

These warriors were not evolved humans. They were nothing if not slightly stronger than ordinary people, yet their fighting spirit remained even when most of their battalion comrades had died. It was impressive to see the sheer determination they have despite their weakened bodies.

"Hopefully not too many die later," Luo Yuan thought.

Luo Yuan had the giant lizard and Lao Huang jump in first. Both the creatures made a big splash. Most of the beasts underwater were frightened by these two gigantic creatures and swam for their lives.

Luo Yuan then hopped onto the lizard's back. He then tied a rope to the lizard's neck to have everyone slide down. Ten minutes

later, only Chen Xianfeng was left. Luo Yuan untangled the rattan rope and looked at the former hesitantly.

Chen Xianfeng stood by the highway with his eyes staring at Luo Yuan. Anyone could see that he was nervous and frightened. If he did not ride the lizard, he might perish in the river.

When a land creature got into the water, its abilities would weaken. Furthermore, he could not swim. There was no other choice but death that awaits him if he entered the water alone.

“There’s something I’ve been meaning to say, but I don’t know where to start.” Luo Yuan said as he sighed.

Chen Xianfeng looked alarmed but grunted after a while and said, “Speak.”

“I’ve never told you the goal of this trip, but we’re going to a secret military base this time. You should know that you’d never be able to enter like this. You’d either be killed straight away or locked in a lab. Every meeting is destined to see us part ways, and it won’t end well for you if you follow us. Leave.. leave this place and leave Jiangnan Province. It’ll keep you alive longer, I hope.” Luo Yuan explained.

Chen Xianfeng was stunned! He looked at Luo Yuan, and then the rest of the crew with disbelief. The rest of the group could not look him in his eyes. He gradually came to understand what Luo Yuan was telling him and thought maybe he should have come to the same conclusion a long time ago. His expression noticeably

changed the next minute. The violence inside him could no longer be suppressed as his fear towards Luo Yuan disappeared. He screamed, “YOU...LIED TO...ME!”

“You...all...lied to me.”

“You...all...lied to me!!!”

Then he turned and ran. His untamed growls echoed in the air.

Even after a while, Chen Xianfeng’s voice still seemed to echo in their ears. While they felt bad, they were relieved at the same time. Not everyone could look past Chen Xianfeng’s scary looks, enormous size and volatile emotions like Luo Yuan did. If it were not for Luo Yuan, he might have already eaten some of the crew.

“I’ve heard that human mutation goes deep into the genes. It’s impossible to stop with current medical knowledge, and it would only get worse with time. It’s good for everyone that he leave as early as possible.” Zhou Yicheng tried to comfort everyone seeing how their mood was affected by this incident.

“Let’s not talk about this. Prepare to depart!” Luo Yuan shook his head, evidently trying to shake away the emotions running through his head. This decision was one he made long ago, but he didn't expect it to have happened in this manner.

As his voice echoed, everyone seemed to feel like a bucket of cold water had been poured over their heads. They certainly felt guilty

but what lies ahead was scary as hell. Huo Dong held onto the handle of his knife and did breathing exercises repeatedly. Zhao Yali and the three children's faces went white.

“Don't worry; it's only about ten meters ahead. It'll pass soon.” Luo Yuan looked at the people who were tensed up and comforted them. He then spoke to Wang Shishi, “You pay attention too, don't be distracted.”

Wang Shishi nodded obediently.

“Sit tight and let's go!” Luo Yuan announced after everything was set.

The giant lizard moved slowly, with the current pounding against it heavily. Just as Huo Dong opened his mouth to speak, a drop of water splattered into it, triggering him to spit a few times. Once bitten twice shy, nobody wanted to come across the same thing after experiencing the terror of the parasites in the seawater by the bridge.

“Eh, why is the water salty?” he then asked in reaction.

“Could be due to the sea. Maybe there are sea creatures here too.” Cao Lin said with a somber expression.

“Don't distract yourselves. We're crossing the river now. Hang on tight and don't get thrown off.” Luo Yuan reminded them.

There was a carpet woven with rattan on the lizard's back, so it was easy to grip onto to stabilize their bodies. Else, the lizard's back would be tough to stay seated on no matter how slow it moved.

Everyone grabbed onto the carpet without a word.

Soon, the lizard entered the river with a slight stumble. The women screamed at the top of their lungs but were not flung off since they were prepared.

Right then, Luo Yuan felt weak, no longer feeling the earth's energy.

From his experience, he knew it was due to his own evolved ability being blocked by the water as his Physique attribute returned to its original value. He took a deep breath, trying to adjust to the 'weak' state slowly.

Luo Yuan pulled his Zhanmadao out and observed the water with undivided attention. The river flowed violently, whirlpool after whirlpool appearing around the lizard as it moved.

Fortunately, the river was a bit small, so it was unable to contain larger sized beasts but that did not mean those smaller ones were harmless. If anything, they were harder to see, especially now that the river was connected to the ocean. There were probably creatures from the ocean that swam against the current to this very river.

Luo Yuan's senses weakened immensely in the murky water. While he could usually sense things within a 50-meter radius in the air, he could only sense things within a five-meter radius, and it was not clear. The distance could not even compare to when he detected underground basements on land but of course, that was partly due to his Earth Stomp ability.

The lizard's steps became irregular. Its eyes were staring into the murky water from time to time as it got restless.

“Ow!” It suddenly roared without warning as its body shook.

The loud sound caused ripples to break out across the water while deafening everyone else. Even Luo Yuan lost his hearing for a moment.

“What's up!?” Lin Xiaoji asked loudly; his face filled with fear.

Chapter 177: Bloody

Countless shadows were seen heading towards them under the water.

The copper scent of blood circulated the river attracting various beasts. It was from the lizard; whose scales were yet to grow in many parts of its body as its wounds had yet to heal fully. It could not withstand these sharp-toothed fishes' attacks.

Luo Yuan had not thought of how to relieve the situation. The giant lizard was already growling from the pain it suffered, and on top of that, it is a land creature's instinct to be fearful of water, so it increased its speed without hesitation. Getting to the other side of the river was its goal.

Its sheer size divided the river into two halves like a small hill, causing some ten-meter-tall splashes. Luo Yuan's heart jumped as he quickly ordered it to stop. But how could it have obeyed though? With its mind already paralyzed with fear as it rushed towards the other side of the river!

Everything was happening too fast to process-a ferocious wave was already coming their way before they could even react. The color noticeably drained from their faces.

"Careful!" Luo Yuan could only get a word out of his mouth before he too was swallowed by the wave. In the nick of time, Luo Yuan could only manage to grab a soldier who was about to be washed away and Chong Chuqiang who was near him. After the

wave had subsided, he was dumbfounded to find half the group already wiped off the lizard's back.

His team was alright, thanks to their physique with each of them having reached 12 points. They sat in the center, so they were safer compared to the others. They even managed to protect the other two children. As for the group of recovering soldiers though, most of them were washed off the lizard by now.

“Zhou Yicheng!!! Has anyone seen Zhou Yicheng!?” Luo Yuan quickly asked when he could no longer see the man.

“He has been swept away too.” Huang Jiahui said with a pale face.

“What?” Luo Yuan quickly looked towards the river. He could see a few soldiers swimming over with all their might, but Zhou Yicheng was nowhere to be seen. The lizard did not slow down though, which made Luo Yuan kick it with all his might out of anger! When it dawned on the lizard that it had made a mistake, the creature stopped.

Luo Yuan was frantic! Not only was Zhou Yicheng key to completing his mission, but he was also the only point of contact between him and the secret military base. Failing the mission would at most cost him some EXP and slow down his level up progress, but without Zhou Yicheng, he would never be able to find the base even if he turned Hucheng City inside out!

It was not that he did not ask about the location before, it's just

that Zhou Yicheng had his lips sealed. Therefore, if Zhou Yicheng perished, so would his hope of entering the reconstruction area. Now that the sea level was rising even further, waves of beasts would be coming in his direction since the mutated beasts would migrate to higher land. By then, even if he survived, everyone else might not.

Since his parents passed away, he lost contact with most of his relatives. Huang Jiahui and Wang Shishi were his only family now, and he would be devastated to lose any of them. If he could leave and go back to a normal society, he would rather live poorly than to live his life as if every day was his last. Therefore, he must find Zhou Yicheng.

“Da-da-da!!!”

A rifle's firing woke Luo Yuan up from his thoughts. “Faster! Swim faster!” a few soldiers shouted in panic as they opened fire towards the water. Seven to eight meters in front of them was a soldier swimming forward with all his might. Something was tailing him, and it felt like the shadow of death. Suddenly, he stopped swimming and looked at everyone hopelessly. Analyzing quickly, he then changed direction and began to swim away from them, not wanting to bring danger to his comrades.

Before he managed to swim even half a meter later, blood gushed out from beneath; staining the murky river red. The blood seemed to have triggered something in the river as the water nearby stirred in turbulence. Fresh blood squirted out from the soldier's mouth and a mutated fish leaped out of the water and bit his shoulder. The half-meter long fish with a big head had a mouthful

of sharp teeth, crushing the fallen soldier's shoulder with just one bite. Then, with its developed fins, it clung onto the soldier's arm and began chewing into his chest! Blood spurted everywhere!

As the fishes gathered around the victim, another soldier nearby was attacked too. Bullets fired endlessly as Huang Jiahui and Huo Dong tried to help. Still, nothing could save the soldier. Wang Shishi even tried using her flying shuttle to rescue them, but she almost lost control over the shuttle when it got into the water, putting a stop to her attempts.

The soldiers died cruel deaths one by one. The group watched the bloody scene in horror but the remaining soldiers were calm. Other than a despaired look, no one had much reaction to the gory scene. Perhaps they had been through enough to be numbed by it.

More than ten seconds passed as Luo Yuan stared at the river thinking of its danger. Nothing good could come out of it if he dragged this on so he said, "You guys look out for each other, I'm going to find him."

Then, without so much of a glance at Huang Jiahui and the rest of the crew, he dove into the water with the Zhanmadao in between his teeth. His eyes were useless in the dirty water so he could only rely on his senses to feel his surroundings. He reached the bottom of the river in an instant with his speed. The water weeds were dense, dancing along with the ebb and flow of the current, flowing towards his legs as he stood up.

With a wave of the Zhanmadao, he chopped the weeds off quickly. They looked like they were still alive though, wriggling

before flowing away with the current. Looking at the strange water weeds, Luo Yuan suddenly had a sliver of hope. He figured that Zhou Yicheng was probably entangled in these weeds instead of having been swept away by the currents. However, he realized there was a downside to saving him underwater; his speed, while he was using his Zhanmadao, was less than a third of his usual speed and his abilities were also weakened seven-fold.

Therefore, he did not want to stay long in the river so he swam around to find his target as quickly as he could. There were plenty of creatures in the water, most of them traveling in schools. Some fierce carnivorous fishes swam towards him once he was in sight. Without thinking, he allowed his aura to permeate the water. It was as if a tuning fork was placed under the water, producing a high-frequency vibration.

Fishes around fled instinctively as if struck by lightning. A frown was visible between Luo Yuan's brows as his aura was immensely weaker underwater. These were low-level fishes, and they should have died from his aura alone if this happened on land. Furthermore, the area of effect was reduced to about five to six meters, just like his senses.

He would be in an extremely dangerous position if there were blue or dark blue level beasts nearby. He could only pray that he would not come across any of them until he gets out of the water. He searched around carefully using his senses and suddenly felt a vaguely human form urging him to swim over.

It was indeed Zhou Yicheng but he was already wrapped in layers of water weeds. He was hardly moving as his body was tightly

constrained. If the military map had not been floating beside him, he would not even be sure certain it was Zhou Yicheng as even his head was tangled in the water weeds.

Luo Yuan's arrival seemed to spur the water weeds to head in his direction, not knowing what awaited them. A few flashes of his blade later and all the water weeds were cleared. Luo Yuan could not assess Zhou Yicheng's condition though. Perhaps he fainted from the many attacks or loss of breath. Not wanting to waste any time, he grabbed the man and swam towards the surface without pulling the weeds off him.

What greeted him when he arrived at the surface made him gasp in shock. The spilled blood had now attracted larger beasts to the vicinity. Water tracks ran through the river's surface at a fast speed. The surface of the water now looked like a boiling pot of porridge.

Were it not for the lizard's continuous growls and large size; the mutated fishes would have jumped on them by now. As for Lao Huang, it was already on the other side of the river having fled in fear long ago.

Luo Yuan quickly swam towards the lizard. Huang Jiahui, who saw him, was happily surprised. But her positive emotion was short-lived and she soon shouted, "Careful!"

Chapter 178: Walking On Water

Luo Yuan did not need to turn around to know what had happened. He had heard Huang Jiahui's warning.

Flexing his arms, he tossed Zhou Yicheng towards the giant lizard, the man landing accurately near the creature after crossing 7 – 8 meters of distance in the air.

“Pull him up and clean away the water weeds,” Luo Yuan spoke calmly as if the mutated fish coming for him was a piece of meat waiting to be devoured.

His words calmed Huang Jiahui and everyone else, who were watching.

The current became violent, causing Luo Yuan to sway. His senses told him that there was a seven to eight meter long fish coming at him like a speeding train, splitting the water in the river.

Had they been on land, the creature could have easily been killed with a slash of his blade.

There was not much he could do in the water, though. He was anxious to be facing such a creature, but he knew his anxiety would only burden himself and everyone else.

The mutated fish was swift. It was coming at Luo Yuan with its

mouth wide open, its sharp teeth within a breath's distance from him.

Luo Yuan finally made his move.

He trod through the water rapidly, a current forming underneath his legs by his speed. It suddenly felt as if he was stepping on solid ground.

With his arms also moving in strokes, he leaped out of the water unexpectedly, jumping more than three meters into the air.

Once he was out of the water, there was no more resistance. He felt free as a bird.

Meanwhile, the fish chased him, watching its food escape into the air.

It almost made Luo Yuan chuckle.

It wanted to die.

Luo Yuan was more reserved in the water because it made him a lot weaker. Killing the fish might result in an injury, but they were mid-air now, so he was no longer the prey.

The fish was too slow in Luo Yuan's eyes.

His body hovered mid-air, the Zhanmadao in his right hand slashing through the fish's mouth and splitting its jaws into two.

This was not the end, though.

Luo Yuan's arms moved briskly, intense black rays striking like lightning as pieces of the fish dropped into the water like dumplings, painting a large area of the river red.

Grey clouds gathered around as rain started to pour.

Luo Yuan had hovered rather long mid-air, borrowing force from his blade's high-frequency movement. He only fell when the fish had been diced, and even then, his descent was slow; somewhat similar to a feather landing on the ground.

He suddenly thought of something.

He had always held onto the principle of wishes coming true, slowing himself down by sheer Will when he jumped off somewhere high. He believed that he could fly freely once his Will got strong enough.

It sounded similar to telekinesis, except telekinesis felt more like another limb on one's body after evolving; a limb different from other organs or parts of the body. It could manipulate weapons and generate energy from nothing. It could even support the body in flight when it got powerful enough, but there was also the problem of distance – telekinesis' effective distance, to be precise.

Just like an arm supporting the body, it could not exceed the arm's reach, allowing only low-height flight.

Will was different. It was a matter of the heart. What the heart wanted, it could get. As long as one had Will that was sufficiently powerful, one could fly as high or as far as they wished.

Of course, Luo Yuan's Will was not powerful enough yet to fulfill his dream of flying. It could only allow him to reduce his weight and land effortlessly.

He could not fly yet, but could he run on water?

Water had a certain buoyancy and tension of its own. If one could stay afloat by treading through, then with sufficient speed and strength, running on water might also be possible. Besides, judging by his earlier leap, water and land would probably feel the same for him with 14-points in Dexterity.

He had yet to try it out because the water had been too dangerous. Now that he thought of it though, he felt rather eager to do it.

As he concentrated his Will, the faintest glow started radiating from his body. His foot went into the water, a splash exploding on the surface as his body bounced a meter high.

"Too much power," he thought.

He went softer on the second step.

Too light. He nearly sunk.

After several shaky steps in his initial attempts and several adjustments, he managed to walk on water, as if strolling around in a park. He was so fast; he left ripples behind him.

The scene defied logic.

His people were used to him always performing some miracle and were less shocked by it, but this was the soldiers' first time. They were so shaken; they could not help but fear Luo Yuan a little more.

The fish's carcass and the rich scent of its blood had attracted other creatures that lived in the water.

They went in one after the other, losing all rationality and ending up biting each other.

Waves tore through the river, the already murky waters turning muddy.

Taking advantage of the opportunity, Luo Yuan ordered the lizard to move quickly.

Perhaps the bigger beasts had scared the mutated fish away, because no other fish came near them, not even at the deepest part of the river, where the water came up to Luo Yuan's stomach. They all reached the other side safely.

When they got back on the highway, everyone sighed in relief.

Their situation was still bad. Four of the soldiers had died, and Zhou Yicheng was unconscious.

"How is he?" Luo Yuan asked, looking at the man.

The soldiers had taken care of him.

The water weeds had been cleared away, and his clothes had been taken off to cover him from the rain. However, his eyes were shut tight, and he was breathing shallowly. Luo Yuan saw tiny red dots on his exposed skin, a reddish-yellow pus flowing out as a soldier kept wiping it away. His eyes were rimmed red.

The soldier's mouth moved with a sigh, but he kept quiet.

"Not very good. The water weeds had some soft thorns, and they were already attached to him when he was found," Cao Ling answered.

The water weeds had long been thrown away by the group, so Luo Yuan could not determine what they were, but it was possible that the carnivorous weeds could inject venom that might affect

one's digestive or nervous system.

The pus looked somewhat similar to dissolved traces of fat and protein. The man would not have been able to survive the night if he had not been treated in time.

Luo Yuan sighed. "We'll rest here tonight and leave tomorrow."

The giant lizard stopped in front of an outpost.

It was evident that survivors had stayed there before as there were garbage and traces of ashes everywhere. The most obvious sign were the clear footprints covered in thick dust. It would seem that the last survivors there had left a long time ago.

Huo Dong and Lin Xiaoji began wiping out the mutated beasts still inside with their knives.

They could already handle regular beasts on their own, without Luo Yuan's help.

Huo Dong pulled the decayed cotton sheets up, a dozen of bugs the size of a fist running helter-skelter. Pieces of cloth had blocked all possible exits, so they had nowhere to go. Huo Dong stepped on them and walked to the bed frame. "At least it's not wet."

He chopped the steel bars around the bed and took out the wooden board.

This would be their firewood for cooking dinner.

Lin Xiaoji beside him was doing the same thing when he asked hesitantly, “I’ve heard that we might be sent to the reconstruction area in the Northwest when we arrive at the secret military base. What’s your plan?”

“Plan?” the question caught Huo Dong off guard, his actions slowing down. Realizing that he had never thought about it, he said, “Me? I’ll just see how it goes, I guess. You’re evolved, though. The government will surely recruit you. You’ll be much better off than most of us.”

He was rather envious, but he knew it was all based on luck.

“The government hires evolved people for dangerous jobs anyway. What’s the difference compared to now?” Lin Xiaoji sighed. “I want to find a job and live like an average person. Don’t tell anyone that I’m evolved. I’ll tell them when it’s the right time.”

“Do you think Boss Luo’s powers will cause a buzz when we get there?” Huo Dong asked, a thought blossoming in his mind.

“I think it’s unlikely. China is a big country with many people. He’d just be another evolved person there. Look at Wang Shishi. She’s not that far from Luo Yuan, maybe even a bit better than him. Too bad my ability is crap,” Lin Xiaoji complained as he touched the wooden board.

“It’s a good thing your ability is weak. Otherwise, you’d be flying already.” Huo Dong thought silently.

Chapter 179: Mastery

The soldiers gathered around Zhou Yicheng quietly, the unconscious man looking as good as gone. Within a short time, he had gotten much skinnier – his cheekbones were protruding, and his cheeks had sunken. He seemed to be losing flesh and blood rapidly, his pulse weakening.

More pus seeped from his body at a faster rate. It was not just the tiny holes made by the thorns that leaked. It seemed that every pore on his body was leaking pus. He looked as if he was decaying as pus pooled under his body. It gave out a stench, not unlike that of a decomposed corpse.

The atmosphere was depressing. Some of the soldiers had tears in their eyes.

There was a big number of people around Zhou Yicheng, so Huang Jiahui watched from afar, her eyes flitting to the door from time to time. The man's only hope of survival now was Luo Yuan. She could only pray that he'd be in time.

A while later, heavy footsteps came from outside along with the sound of a big object being dragged on the ground.

Everyone looked delighted.

Luo Yuan appeared at the door, a large canine-looking beast about 4 meters long in his hands.

The creature looked like it weighed a ton, yet Luo Yuan held it like it weighed nothing. It did not even look injured. Judging by the air puffing from its nostrils, it was still very much alive.

“Find a room and move him there. Unless you want him to die,” Luo Yuan said as soon as he came in, looking at the soldiers.

The soldiers stood up in excitement. “You can save our Commander?”

Soldiers were the most stubborn people in the world, especially these die-hard veterans. If Luo Yuan had not been evolved or displayed his abilities to the soldiers, it would have taken a while to persuade them. Now though, they all trusted him at his word.

“I can’t guarantee anything, but there might be a chance,” Luo Yuan said. He dared not promise them anything. Life absorbing properties were useful, but they could only strengthen the defense of one’s body, not heal venom. It would all still depend on Zhou Yicheng.

“As long as there’s hope, we trust you,” a soldier said quickly.

After cleaning up a little, the soldiers moved Zhou Yicheng into one of the many rooms of the outpost.

“Everyone out,” Luo Yuan ordered as he entered the room, carrying the beast. He tossed it on the floor, and the creature

jerked instinctively but remained unconscious.

The soldiers left after feeling the slight quake of the floor.

Luo Yuan did not close the door. One look at Zhou Yicheng was enough to know that the man was at the threshold of death. His skin was blotchy with blood spots. It looked like it was about to melt off.

Without delay, he stabbed his Zhanmadao into the beast's neck, pressing its head.

The agony woke the beast up as it growled angrily, subconsciously trying to turn over, only to realize that it had lost all feeling below its neck.

Its roar turned into a wail, the sound stopping altogether when Luo Yuan knocked it unconscious using his Will.

There was silence once more as the beast spasmed.

Luo Yuan pulled Zhou Yicheng's stiff fingers apart to make him hold the blade's handle. The rest would be up to the man himself.

Meanwhile, Luo Yuan sat in a meditating position and considered the inspiration he'd had when he'd been hunting just now.

He was extremely familiar with the Zhanmadao by now. He could

feel its every inch in his mind clearly and sense every tiny crack on it even with his eyes closed.

Touching the sword gave him the illusion of touching his skin.

One could say that he was far more familiar with the Zhanmadao than with his body.

He could control most of his muscles, but he was still hopeless at manipulating the functions of his internal organs and the flow of his blood, even more so at controlling his hormone secretion and the growth of his cells.

Of course, he could forcefully use his Will to affect the function of his internal organs slightly, but that would take a long time and would not help him in mastering his power. It would be just like a deaf person using a hearing aid – they may hear sounds, but they were still deaf.

Luo Yuan had not noticed it earlier. Maybe it was due to him being a swordsman, but the system's knowledge on that subject was messy. It was not until he had held the Zhanmadao and felt like it was connected to his soul that he had gotten the idea.

If he could master an inanimate object like the Zhanmadao, there was no reason why he could not do the same with his body, which was a part of him.

Moreover, he realized that his mastery of his body increased with

each Will level-up, but it was still passive, depending only on his Will rising.

His capabilities had long exceeded the period where he could grow by working out himself. It was difficult enough increasing by even one AP, and the APs resulting from leveling up were insufficient to distribute as each attribute had its importance – Will was naturally the last thing in Luo Yuan's mind.

He was aware that it was because of the immersion of his Will that he could connect so well with the Zhanmadao. If he proactively immersed himself in his Will, would he get similar results on his body and speed up his mastery of it?

All these were mere hypotheses that needed to be tested.

His eyes seemed to shine brighter as his attention was entirely focused on his body.

His dense, web-like muscular fibers, hard yet complex bone structure, gushing blood and all sorts of organs pulsed to form an intricate system. Although he had seen this once before when he had tried to manipulate his heartbeat by attempting to use the Earth Stomp, he still was out of breath as he watched it this time.

His organs were magnified more than ten times before his eyes, but the magnification did not stop there. Bending his body to his Will, the magnification increased until he could see even the tiniest of blood vessels.

That was the limit of the magnification. The depletion of his senses was much faster than usual as well.

Luo Yuan remained in that state, scanning his whole body inch by inch with his Will. The depletion of his Will was as rapid as if he was fighting.

He was not alarmed by it. Though Will was something mysterious, it was still a kind of force that would deplete as you use it. At the moment, if he were to gather his Will on the blade, it could probably last between thirty minutes to an hour if it was not used to cut or slash. The duration could be even longer in a vacuum, without the interruption of air particles.

If it was exhausted, it meant his Will had to be working on something else. He did not know what exactly, but he was sure it would be effective.

He tried his hardest to maintain the calmness in his heart, setting out on a journey of self-discovery.

Now that he had gotten a good look at it, he realized that he had a lot of bruises on his body. Some of his blood vessels had blood clots while old injuries had not healed properly. This was the effect of unbalanced attributes, the consequence of overexertion.

While these were all minor issues, if he did nothing about them, they could turn out to be a great hindrance to his capabilities.

Chapter 180: Danger

As thoughts passed through his mind, his blood vessels unclogged themselves one after the other. However, there was nothing he could do for vessels that had healed incorrectly. If Luo Yuan wanted to repair his injured muscles, it could only be done by breaking his muscle fibers and reconnecting them.

However, Will could not be used to harm one's body as the human body would subconsciously protect itself. Unless he hypnotized himself, it could not be done. Even then, it would have to be a deep hypnosis.

Luo Yuan knew nothing about this, so he put it off until next time.

Less than five minutes later, when he felt that his Will had depleted by half, he snapped out of it. Depleted amounts of Will would heavily damage his conscious state and his capabilities – an undoubtedly risky thing to do during such dangerous times.

As the shine in his eyes faded away, he slowly stood up.

He felt unusually light, perhaps because of his unclogged vessels. He tested his muscle movement, but he did not feel any improvement.

He was not disappointed, though. Improvement had always been a gradual process; he'd be weirded out if it happened too suddenly. Besides, he was already feeling better than ever.

He turned and looked at Zhou Yicheng. The man was still unconscious and pale, but in a much better state than before. He looked alive at least, breathing regularly as pus stopped seeping out. He was on the way to a full recovery.

The most critical moment had passed. The life force of the dark blue level beast had dragged him back from death's grip.

Luo Yuan sighed in relief. He looked at the beast with a turn of his head and noticed that it was dying.

"Water, water," Zhou Yicheng murmured, his parched lips moving although his eyes were shut tight.

There was no water where they were, and Luo Yuan was too lazy to ask the others to send some up, so he brutally slashed the beast's throat open with the dagger by his hip, and fresh blood gushed out from the cut, not unlike a fountain.

Zhou Yicheng instinctively gulped the blood down, his cheeks flushing with the amount of blood he consumed.

Barely thirty seconds later, his stomach was bloated as blood refluxed out his mouth. Luo Yuan dropped the beast back on the floor and put the Zhanmadao's handle back into the man's hand.

After such extreme amounts of torture, the mutated beast finally succumbed to its injuries.

Its life force did not end after it died. It continued being absorbed for a long time, finally disappearing after half an hour. The beast's carcass did not harden like usual corpses but became softer instead.

Luo Yuan went back down, carrying the dead beast. The soldiers quickly surrounded him.

"How's the Battalion Commander?" Their faces looked anxious.

"It's nothing serious; he's pretty much stable now. Go up and see," Luo Yuan said.

The soldiers did exactly that, rushing up to where Luo Yuan was before.

"Clean this. We'll have it for dinner tonight." Luo Yuan shook his head with a smile as he tossed the beast down.

"Is it still edible?" Huang Jiahui asked, pointing at the creature.

"Should be." Luo Yuan was not sure either. Absorbing life was pretty literal, but the definition of life was kind of vague. The most basic form of life was made of protein and nucleic acid, but the combination of both could not be called life; otherwise, dead bodies would be classified as living things as well. That was the reason why life remained the biggest mystery in science.

When they skinned the beast though, everyone held their breath as the body seemed to have decomposed on the inside. Its tendons had snapped, and its flesh clung to its skin. The tissue broke off easily when Huo Dong gave it a light tug. It looked like minced meat when he pinched it.

Everyone exchanged a look of disbelief. The flesh of mutated beasts was tough. Not even Luo Yuan was able to press it into minced meat.

When they put the meat into boiling water, it dissolved completely, leaving a pot of murky soup. The soup was bland and tasteless, with a sandy texture.

Luo Yuan suspected that the beast's DNA had been damaged. It was clearly inedible, so he went out to hunt once more. It was early enough.

Nightfall came quickly, and the weather turned gloomy. Everyone went to sleep soon after dinner, while there was still light.

Luo Yuan sat by the door like usual.

His thoughts agitated him, making it difficult for him to meditate. This was a rare occurrence following a level-up. Usually, he was able to find his peace within minutes, but that night he was still restless after three hours.

He stood up half an hour later and gave up.

It was still raining outside, and the next day would most likely be the same. Just as Luo Yuan was about to find a corner and finally head off into a slumber, a small shadow came out of the tent. Noticing him, it went back inside in fear.

After a whole minute, the shadow sneaked out once more, hesitating as it looked at Luo Yuan's back.

Luo Yuan chuckled. He had already sensed that she had been rolling around in the tent, unable to fall asleep.

"How come you're not asleep? What is it?" he asked gently as he turned around.

"I... I need to pee," Chen Jiayi stuttered in reply. She had not expected Luo Yuan to turn around so suddenly.

"Then go quickly. Any corner will do. It's not dangerous here," Luo Yuan said.

"Oh." Chen Jiayi seemed to need to pee as she ran to the nearest corner immediately. Not long afterward, she returned. As she walked to the tent, Luo Yuan called out to her, "Come over, let's chat."

Chen Jiayi did not know what Luo Yuan wanted to talk to her about. Her expression seemed worried as she dragged her steps,

trembling like a frightened rabbit.

“Are you that scared of me?” Luo Yuan asked with a smile.

“N... No,” Chen Jiayi answered quickly, lowering her head. Her hands were wrenching the hem of her clothes.

“Then lift your head up. You won’t survive the apocalypse much longer being this timid. The first thing you need to do is overcome your fears,” Luo Yuan said a bit more seriously. Being this timid would do her no good. Even Wang Shishi was not as shy as she used to be anymore.

“I... I... Uncle, I will be brave.” Chen Jiayi lifted her head at once, her face paling as her trembles became violent. Tears threatened to fall from her eyes.

Luo Yuan had not expected to scare her so much with just a few words. He waved her away as he said, “We’ll see how you behave. Now go back to sleep, and don’t toss and turn. We have to leave early tomorrow morning.”

Luo Yuan’s words had apparently put an enormous amount of pressure on young Chen Jiayi as she walked back uneasily, tears flowing profusely down her cheeks. She stood by the entrance of the tent for a bit before she suddenly walked back over to Luo Yuan.

Luo Yuan looked at the girl questioningly. “What is it?”

“I... It’s not that I can’t sleep, I... I just sense danger.” Chen Jiayi forced herself to lift her head up, revealing her tear-stricken face.

“Don’t scare yourself. Just go to sleep.” Luo Yuan did not get her meaning at first. When he did though, his smile disappeared. “You mean you can sense danger?”

“Y... yes. Very, very big danger.” The girl did not know how to describe it. She just kept gesturing with her hands as she said worriedly, “It’s... approaching quickly.”

Luo Yuan paced around, his heart sinking. The more he thought about it; the more things seemed out of place. Maybe that was why he couldn’t find peace. “Are you evolved?”

“I... I don’t know.” The girl took a few steps back, shocked by Luo Yuan’s serious expression.

“Are you usually able to sense threats?” Luo Yuan asked, guessing that the girl was evolved, but she did not know it.

“Plenty of threats, big and small. But not as big as today. Not even like this afternoon,” Chen Jiayi replied with a sob.

Luo Yuan lay on the ground immediately and listened quietly. Suddenly he shouted loudly, “Everyone wake up! We’re leaving in five minutes!”

Chapter 181: Against Time

During the apocalypse, humankind was more alert than ever. Most people slept with their clothes on and their weapons by their side, prepared for battle at any time, and they would wake up by even the slightest movement, let alone Luo Yuan's shout.

The group leaped out of sleep. They did not show a single sign of fatigue though they had just woken up. Grabbing hold of their weapons, they rushed out of their tents.

"Brother Luo, what's going on?" Wang Shishi asked frantically.

"I'll explain everything on the way out," Luo Yuan said quickly. He paced anxiously as the faint sense of danger got stronger. Seeing that they were still packing their tents, he shouted, "There's no time! Leave everything behind except your weapons! We have to go!"

Everyone's hearts sank as the feeling that something bad was about to happen dawned upon them.

They reluctantly put down the things they were packing and left of the outpost quickly.

The giant lizard and Lao Huang were already pacing around on edge. The beasts may not be as intelligent as humans but their instincts never failed them. The two creatures clearly felt the danger that was heading towards them.

The lizard laid low upon hearing Luo Yuan's order, the man hopping onto it with Chen Jiayi in his arms, and pulling everyone up right away.

On his command, the lizard ran. It picked up its speed as it sprinted through the raindrops as if there was an invisible danger chasing it in the dark.

“Hang on tight, so you don't get flung off!” Luo Yuan shouted, pulling the unconscious Zhou Yicheng to his side and pressing his hand on him. The man immediately stopped moving as if an invisible force had enveloped him.

No one had needed Luo Yuan to remind them. The group was already keeping their bodies low, their hands gripping the carpet tight. The lizard's back was more spacious now that four people were gone, but it was still not wide enough for them to lay down completely, so they could only lay as low as possible to try and reduce the air resistance. They still felt as if they could be flung off at any time, though.

The giant lizard was naturally not an animal that you could ride on; riding it while it ran felt like you were riding a rollercoaster. That, in addition to the wind blowing against them, made even the soldiers look pale.

It was only their third time riding the lizard, so they were still not used to such a mode of transportation. They could barely hold on as the lizard jogged; it was running so fast, that it made them

feel nauseous.

The soldiers' bodies were tense, and they looked like they were about to throw up. No one dared to make a move as the lizard moved erratically. Falling off from six meters would at best cause them paralysis, if not death.

The only one not moving at all was Luo Yuan. He sat still as if he was sitting on the ground, one arm holding Chen Jiayi while placing his other hand on Zhou Yicheng. He was not holding onto anything to keep himself from falling off. Strangely, no matter how the lizard moved during the trip, he still looked as if he was glued to the lizard's back. Only Chen Jiayi, who was in Luo Yuan's embrace, could feel his muscles tense and relax.

The strong wind messed up his hair as he stared into the endless darkness with a thoughtful expression.

Chen Jiayi looked up at Luo Yuan. The warmth on her back gave her a strong sense of security, despite the fact that up until recently she had been afraid of this man.

Along the way, an injured soldier was almost flung off when he lost his grip on the carpet. If it were not for Luo Yuan, who had reacted quickly, the man would have died.

Under the current circumstances, if someone did fall off, Luo Yuan would have to leave them behind. He would not put everyone in danger just for any individual.

Seconds and minutes passed. Barely ten minutes later, Luo Yuan felt a slight vibration; there was a faint, yet intense buzzing sound in the air, as if all the small noises merged into one.

In the darkness, there seemed to be countless running beasts that were charging towards them.

Fifteen minutes later, the vibration got stronger. Even ordinary people could feel it now.

The giant lizard sped up a few times but had to slow down to its initial speed at Luo Yuan's command.

The lizard's Dexterity was a point higher than Luo Yuan's. Its 15-point Dexterity and its gigantic size could move at a blinding speed if it decided to unleash its full potential. If the road was a smooth, straight line, the lizard's could sprint at speeds up to 400 kilometers per hour at short distances.

Even if it were to jog through long distances, it could still speed itself up to 200 kilometers per hour; guaranteeing its escape from the wave of beasts tailing them.

However, that kind of speed, along with the air resistance and jostling, would have everyone except Luo Yuan falling off. Even Luo Huang, which was still recovering, would be left behind. Thus, Luo Yuan could only be patient and go slow, no matter how impatient he was feeling.

Time is especially precious at the moment as everyone tensed up in preparation for the incoming attack.

A loud boom was heard from about two kilometers away, followed by the sound of cement collapsing.

“It’s the highway,” was the thought running through everyone’s heads. They knew there were no buildings around. The only thing that could be collapsing was the highway.

“Careful,” Luo Yuan suddenly said. His eyes seemed to glow like a cat’s in the dark. The night vision that was a result of his evolution and strong physique enabled him to see far away clearly. He slowly took out a short spear from the sack on his back before passing Chen Jiayi and Zhou Yicheng to Huo Dong and Lin Xiaoji who were beside him before standing upright on the lizard's body.

The unknown danger had everyone breaking out in goosebumps, their gazes instinctively turning towards the darkness. Everyone but Lin Xiaoji could only see a few meters in front of them as they heard the buzzing sound approaching from afar.

It was a strange insect as big as a small van, with a green scaled back. Two pairs of tiny mismatched wings flapped fast as it jumped. Its stomach was ink-black, with a clean cut in the middle. Luo Yuan could not see what was inside because it was too dark, but it did not look like a decoration.

It was large, but it moved swiftly, its strong hind legs and wings allowing it to jump several dozen meters high and about a hundred

meters far.

Considering the lizard's current speed, it would catch them within ten seconds.

What complicated the situation was that there were more than twenty of those insects.

Most of them were underneath the highway. Only six of the insects were on it, but Luo Yuan was not sure if the other insects would join in the battle, should he attack one of them.

Sweat dotted his forehead as his heart beat violently, nerves and excitement boiling in his blood.

Closer. They were getting closer.

The mutated insects did not avoid the humans. Instead, they flew right through them. Everyone had felt a strong gust of wind before an insect landed about ten meters in front of the lizard. Soon it jumped again, disappearing from view.

Then the second and the third one followed...

Luo Yuan was slightly relieved, but his relief was once again short-lived.

The fourth insect made obvious pauses between its leaps, unlike

the others that moved without a pause. It seemed like it was calculating something.

Although it went on its way not too long afterward, its leaps had changed significantly – some were longer while others were much shorter. It kept adjusting its hopping distance. A short time later, it paused slightly before leaping into the air with more force.

Luo Yuan looked up. The insect was at the highest point of its jump and came down full force, flapping its wings. This action was something the previous insects had not done; it was a clear sign of a predator hunting its prey. Once Luo Yuan realized where the insect would land, its target became clear – it was the already exhausted Lao Huang.

The long journey had roused the insect's appetite, and it had chosen Lao Huang because it was still in recovery.

With gravity on its side, the insect accelerated like an incoming missile.

By the time Lao Huang sensed the danger, it was already too late. The insect spread its limbs, its steel, curtain-like legs covering almost eighteen square meters as their sharp ends shined with a deadly gleam.

Before it got close, the cut in the middle of its stomach opened to reveal two rows of sharp black teeth – it was the insect's mouth. Once it reached its prey's back, it would tear its flesh and bite into its spine, shattering it into pieces.

The insect's attack was impulsive, its movement light and fast. Lao Huang hadn't any time to react.

Luo Yuan moved in the nick of time.

His left leg slowly slid forward as his right one landed with tremendous force; his spine rolled like that of a snake's, the veins on his right hand that was holding the short spear popped out like they were tree roots. His whole body seemed to expand before he thrust the short spear into the air.

The speed made everyone's ears hurt. No one could see what had happened. They could only pray that Luo Yuan had eliminated the unknown danger.

Compared to the first time he had done this, Luo Yuan had improved. The powerful recoil had even the lizard stumbling in its steps.

There was no chance of missing considering the target's sheer size and Luo Yuan's 9-point throwing accuracy. In the blink of an eye, the short spear glided through the air at supersonic speed and collided with the insect, flying about ten meters away and landing harshly by the roadside.

The blue level spear exploded into pieces upon the impact, the explosion causing a half-meter diameter wound on the insect.

The insect struggled to stand, collapsing again after a few steps. After repeated struggles, it finally wailed pathetically before surrendering.

The extent of the damage was nothing compared to its body, and the wound was not lethal either. What put the final nail in the insect was the internal injury that it sustained during the high-speed collision. Nothing could save the insect, especially when its internal organs had turned to mush. Not even an extremely powerful one could survive this.

Chapter 182: Seconds Ticking

The insect's shrill wails echoed in the night like fingernails scraping over a piece of glass.

As if some message was transmitted, two insects that were following behind leaped towards the heavily injured member, their antennae rotating rapidly.

Those further away leaped over as well, the number of insects increasing.

Luo Yuan observed the scene, his expression darkening as he realized the insects already far ahead were coming back.

The crisp buzzing sound they made could be heard everywhere. The same species of insects seemed to be gathering there from all around the area.

Their cries rang through the night endlessly, as if they were communicating.

These particular insects had developed a sort of intelligence after they mutated and formed a colony. This phenomenon, which usually only occurred among mammals, could now be seen among low-level insects.

Luo Yuan decided that they could no longer wait. The longer this dragged on, the more dangerous it would be. Once there was a

certain number of insects, considering their agility, even he would be at risk.

He retrieved another short spear from his backpack, and after taking a step with his right foot, he threw the spear at the speed of lightning.

Before its swooshing sound could even fade, a second one followed and then a third.

The short spears thrust through the air, exceeding the speed of sound. Another insect who was near the injured one was hit before it could even react, its tough exterior was crushed upon colliding with the spear. The force pushed it about twenty meters away, scratches forming on the cement from the violent friction.

Seeing the sudden attack, a third insect tried to flee. However, before its body could leave the ground, another spear came, landing on its hind leg, breaking the limb and injuring its soft stomach.

A fourth spear, a fifth... a sixth.

Luo Yuan acted quickly and smoothly. All the others could see was just a blurry image of his body before they heard an explosion. The loud sound hurt their ears, making them feel nauseated.

It was a pity that, other than the second and third attack, no other spears had found their target.

Firstly, the insects were too far, and the spears lost speed as they traveled through the rain. Secondly, the insects were already on alert, thus taking away their element of surprise.

Luo Yuan gave up throwing and just held a short spear in his hand, prepared to attack.

The action itself garnered a sense of authority. The insects that charged over only buzzed from afar as a sign of provocation, but dared not come any closer. The lizard kept running; the insects followed it for a short period before fleeing in another direction when they realized that they would not achieve anything that way.

Luo Yuan breathed a sigh of relief, finally feeling the burning pain in the muscles of his arm and back relaxing.

He frowned. His valiant attacks earlier had not been without sacrifice.

Thrusting spears was unlike wielding a sword. The force came directly from the body's movement. The bigger the movement, the more power the short spear would generate. To generate the most significant impact, he had to put all his strength into each thrust.

In addition to his insufficient Dexterity and Strength, he was also suffering from exhaustion.

Usually, such a small injury would heal itself after a good night's

sleep. However, after the great beast migration, there seemed to be threats everywhere. These insects were not the fastest in the wave of beasts. There would be more following soon.

Of course, he could still fight despite his injury, but it would greatly affect his performance.

He was feeling the bane of his attribute incoordination now. He would have to distribute his AP to Strength at the next level-up, or else he would suffer even more.

Just as he was pondering this, he suddenly thought of something else and told the others, “You guys keep an eye out. Let me rest for a bit.”

The group possessed some degree of night vision thanks to the improvement in their Physique. While their vision was not as sharp as his, it was still better than that of ordinary humans.

“You rest, Boss Luo. I’ll be on the lookout over here. Miss Wang is on the other side, you don’t need to worry about a thing,” Huo Dong replied quickly.

Wang Shishi felt flattered as she said with confidence, “Yes, Brother Luo. Don’t worry, there’s still me.”

“I’ll watch out too,” Huang Jiahui said, although she looked worried.

Luo Yuan nodded. Sitting down cross-legged, he quickly focused his Will as a gleam flashed before his eyes.

He wasted no time in directing his gaze toward his injured arm. A large bruise could be seen on his muscles. The blood vessels around it were clogged up, and some of the muscular fibers were torn as well.

This was only a small part of his right arm, yet it had completely hampered the movement in his arm.

Luo Yuan quickly scanned the area and went to work. Using what he experienced in previous days, he used his Will and unclogged his blood vessels before targeting the bruise. The bruise vanished as if a mysterious force had swept it away.

These two steps were the simplest and did not consume much Will.

The third step, though, was a crucial one and the hardest one to pull off. Luo Yuan concentrated once more and began his first attempt at it.

Suddenly, he realized it was much easier than he had anticipated.

What was Will after all? It was the heart, the materialization of the spirit, a wish coming true.

As he thought of what he wanted, the torn muscular fibers began

wriggling on their own and connected to one another. After some itching, they all healed perfectly.

It had taken only a few seconds.

Luo Yuan could not help feeling ecstatic. He could barely keep his cool, and he had to stop as he struggled to calm himself down. He looked over his arm, connecting all the torn fibers using his Will and healing himself.

The whole process took less than a few minutes, and all his torn muscles recovered to how they had been initially.

He opened his eyes and swung his arm around, realizing that the pain had completely disappeared as he regained his strength, seemingly stronger than before.

This was fantastic. Despite the dangerous circumstances, a thrill still ran through his heart.

Self-healing had its cons. The more injuries one sustained, the more dislocated muscles there would be. If there were cracked or broken bones, it would be even worse. No matter how perfectly the bones healed, there would still be a dislocation to a certain degree, and as the number of injuries increased, his strength would continue to weaken.

However, his Will could now make up for all these drawbacks. Suddenly, he thought about all the ills from his old injuries. Had

this not been a crisis, he would have liked to self-mutilate.

“You’re awake already? Why not rest a little longer?” Huang Jiahui asked worriedly once she saw Luo Yuan opening his eyes.

“I’m fine.” Luo Yuan held her hand, smiling as he shook his head.

No other words were needed. They had already formed a tacit understanding after being together for so long. Seeing Luo Yuan’s state, Huang Jiahui’s troubled heart was finally at peace.

Zhao Yali took in the scene wordlessly, her heart feeling like something heavy had been dropped on it.

Meanwhile, Zhou Yicheng woke up with a moan, coughing as he took in a gulp of cold air as soon as he opened his mouth.

The man caught his breath and asked, “Where am I? Why am I not dead yet?”

“Our team leader, Luo Yuan, saved you. We’re on our way to Hucheng City now. You must hang in there, Battalion Commander. We’ll be there soon,” a soldier said carefully as he looked at Luo Yuan.

“I’m alright. I’m feeling much better. Brother Luo, I’ll spare you any words of gratitude. I’ll always remember what you did for me,” Zhou Yicheng told Luo Yuan sincerely as he breathed harshly.

“Don’t mention it. Too bad more people couldn’t be saved,” Luo Yuan said with a sigh.

With a start, Zhou Yicheng said bitterly, “No one is to blame for that. Who... who’s still here? Call out your names.”

“Xie Qiliang, here.”

“Xue Liancheng, here.”

“Li Shaodie, still alive.”

“Bai Shangfeng, here.”

“Wang Weilin, ready to charge at any time.”

“Zhou Bin, here.”

“Zhu Dazhuang, here. I still want to avenge my fallen comrades.”

Zhou Yicheng listened quietly and then gritted his teeth as he spoke with determination, “All of you listen to me. Hang on with all you’ve got. Hope is right in front of us. Don’t fall during the last leg of our journey. I’m keeping my promise. I will survive, and so will you.”

Chapter 183: Mystery

The appearance of the insects was only the beginning. Many other mutated beasts started to appear sporadically.

These mutated beasts were either huge and terrifying, or daft and docile. However, they all had one thing in common. They run very fast, so they could remain ahead.

They were either sprinting in the wild or the isolation belt, but very rarely would any of them pass by the giant lizard. Most of the time, the beasts went about their business, not bothering one another.

After all, the giant lizard was neither weak nor gentle. Its enormous size and the exerting aura of its nearly light green level were strong enough to deter all other beasts, especially the most docile ones, and the herbivores. When they saw the lizard from afar, they would all quickly change direction to avoid running into it.

The current beast migration covered a large area, including almost all parts of the coast, the beasts heading in all directions. Considering the size of the migration area, the density of this wave of beasts was considerably lower and thus could not be compared to the previous wave of beasts. Therefore, they could now have their pick of a safer destination to migrate to.

Of course, those beasts that dared follow or even provoke them usually had terrifying abilities. Such an example was the insects,

which most likely were of a dark blue rank.

By then, the tremors had gotten incredibly strong. The cracking sounds of the broken trees and branches as well as the howling of the mutated beasts could be seen and heard from everywhere. As more mutated beasts rushed to the area, the tussocks on both sides of the road were in a state of turmoil, and the local mutated beasts fled in disorder, the air filling with a raw smell.

The atmosphere was rather oppressive, and the darkness further encouraged it. Everyone felt their hearts throbbing, which almost drove them out of their minds. They wanted to get out of there as soon as possible.

However, the giant lizard slowed down after only about ten minutes of crawling.

“What's going on?”

“It seems that there is a giant rock up ahead blocking the way,” Lin Xiaoji said.

“F*ck, it's a landslide,” Huo Dong could not help swearing when he took a closer look. He looked depressed.

“What can we do? If we change our course, we'll have to go around this mountain,” Wang Xianguang said, going as white as a sheet.

“Wait here while I go check it out.” Luo Yuan had frowned before he jumped off the giant lizard. Mountains from all sides surrounded the road, and the highway went past the mountains horizontally.

For the safety of the transportation system during the apocalypse, both sides of the road have had the hillsides cemented and were supposed to be strong and stable. However, one of the mountain peaks had collapsed for unknown reasons, and the fallen stones were currently blocking the entire highway.

What was worse, a huge rock about 20 meters tall had fallen right in the middle of the road and covered almost all of it.

Most mountains in the Jiangnan District were low in elevation, and thus could only be called hills. If the whole mountain had collapsed, then the rock's height would have been more than 20 meters. Although the elevation of the hill might not be high, its range was not small. If they were to go around it, they would have to walk more than 10 kilometers, and the path would not be as smooth as the highway. It was a forested area, so they would have to extend their journey and would not reach Hucheng City by the next morning.

Luo Yuan wandered around impatiently. When he saw the giant lizard, he got an idea. Maybe he could let it try to crash the giant rock and dig out a path. He checked and realized that the part of the road that was blocked was only about 30 meters long. It would be nothing for the lizard.

Luo Yuan returned and explained his idea to the others. Then he

let everyone jump off the giant lizard and get far away from there so that the spattering gravel would not hurt them.

After instructing them to be careful, Luo Yuan led the lizard towards the giant rock.

“What does he want to do? Have that lizard crash the giant rock?” Zhou Yicheng said in surprise after being put on the ground.

“It's a giant lizard,” Wang Shishi corrected with a serious look on her face. “The giant lizard is was incredibly strong. It won't be a big deal for it to crash that rock.”

“But... that rock is as high as a six-floor building.” Zhou Yicheng did not seem able to conceive it.

“It can still crash it. It can crush even bigger rocks. Its bones are harder than steel,” Wang Shishi explained patiently.

“Shishi, don't lose your focus. Please concentrate on the safety of our surroundings,” Huang Jiahui reprimanded.

“He's the one arguing with me,” Wang Shishi complained as she glanced at Zhou Yicheng.

Zhou Yicheng awkwardly shut his mouth and stopped arguing with the stubborn girl. He felt that his alertness had been reduced, even though he had been staying with them for less than a day.

Compared to evolved people, he felt that they, the soldiers, were the ones who needed protection. The soldiers seemed like ordinary people instead of warriors ready to fight at any time.

This little girl, who was about seventeen or eighteen years old, seemed insignificant and immature, yet she was a terrifying evolved person. Though he had not seen her in battle, based on her ridiculous flying shuttle, which did not even look like a decent weapon, and the serious attitude Luo Yuan and the others treated her with, she did not seem like someone that needed protection.

Suddenly, a loud noise interrupted Zhou Yicheng's thoughts.

There was a cloud of dust about 10 meters ahead of them, and gravel was shooting in all directions like bullets. Fortunately, the smog dispersed quickly.

The giant lizard had hit the rock and created a large hole about ten cubic meters in size on it. Cracks were filling the rest of its surface like spider webs. The giant lizard, however, did not look good. Its head was bleeding profusely, dying the ground red with blood, and it was shaking its head as if it was feeling dizzy.

After the lizard had rested for a while, Luo Yuan tried to have it knock into the rock again, but the lizard whined and retreated pitifully. No matter how much Luo Yuan berated it, it dared not do it again.

Luo Yuan was looking at the cracks on the giant rock. It looked like it was about to collapse and needed only another strike or two.

How could the giant lizard give up at such a critical moment?

When Luo Yuan had first caught it, he had beaten and kicked the beast to tame it. However, the lizard had grown in strength so using violence was no longer effective. Quite the contrary, if he did use any force, its loyalty might drop and make the lizard rebel against him.

Therefore, all Luo Yuan could do was try to tempt it. He took out a food cube from his pocket and moved it up and down before the lizard. The tempting smell caused the beast's eyes to move accordingly before Luo Yuan pointed at the giant rock.

The lizard hesitated, but at the end of the day, the temptation of the food cube was too strong.

It hit the rock again, whining painfully. However, its strength this time was obviously weaker than the first time. It was not effective enough. It had only created a few more cracks.

The lizard turned and looked at Luo Yuan pitifully. It looked very miserable, its head already soaked in blood.

However, Luo Yuan remained indifferent to its light trauma and pointed at the giant rock again.

As the giant lizard realized that it would not get any sympathy from him, it had no choice left but to turn back and face the giant rock once again. The beast had grown smarter, though. It did not

hit the giant rock like it had the first few times. Instead, it walked towards it, flexed its throat and then opened its huge mouth and shot out a burning hot flame, bombarding the giant rock directly.

A large part was blown off the rock creating a big hole as the flame was still burning fiercely. The giant rock could not withhold the stress of such a difference in temperature and finally collapsed.

Luo Yuan was a bit taken aback by the intelligence of the lizard, but he did not duel on it any further.

He threw the food cube in front of it, and the giant lizard caught it quickly, wagging its tail.

Suddenly, its actions became very rigid, its scales rising and its tail moving like a giant sawtooth while it growled in distress.

There was a scream from afar that sounded like Zhao Yali.

“Something’s going on.” Luo Yuan was shocked as he sprinted to where the rest of them were waiting.

In the dark, some unknown beast had confronted Lao Huang.

In fact, it was not a confrontation. Lao Huang was merely whimpering while it retreated.

Suddenly, it was hit by something, and its enormous body started

to roll intensely. The next moment, it hit the rock on the side of the highway hard, convulsed a few times, and went still. Nobody knew whether it was dead or alive.

That's when they heard a gunshot.

Nobody knew whether it had hit its target, as there seemed to have been nothing in its way. An intangible fear made their hearts throb, causing them to have difficulty breathing.

"What's happening? Did you see what it was?" Soon, Luo Yuan had reached the others, the giant lizard following him.

As they heard Luo Yuan's voice, they all felt relieved.

"No, we didn't see anything. We were on alert as soon as we realized that Lao Huang was acting strange," Wang Shishi said breathlessly, her face pale. She was obviously frightened.

"The bullet seems to have missed the target. It's as if nothing was there," one of the soldiers said breathlessly. He had not met such an enemy before.

Luo Yuan stared into the darkness, but it seemed like they were right. There was nothing there at all. And yet, he could feel a malicious intention up ahead. It made him shudder and caused his hair to stand on end. It was pure instinct. Although he could not see, Luo Yuan knew that something was out there. His heart throbbed fast. After hesitating for a moment, he said, "Wait for me

here. I'll go take a look.”

“No, maybe it 's already gone. Please don't go again,” Huang Jiahui said worriedly. An unseen enemy was even more frightening, and she did not want Luo Yuan to take the risk.

“Yes, Little Yuan. Please don't overexert yourself. It's too creepy, you shouldn't go over there,” Zhao Yali said in fear as she held onto Luo Yuan, her body shivering all over.

“Whatever it is, it's targeting us,” Luo Yuan said absentmindedly, “Please move further back.”

Luo Yuan slowly moved Zhao Yali's hands away and attempted to sense the surroundings thoroughly. He felt nothing, so he slowly pulled out his Zhanmadao and walked forward.

Meanwhile, a terrifying aura was emanating from him, slowly growing stronger.

The air started to get restless. The gravel on the ground was vibrating, and a mysterious power was stirring up an invisible air current.

As Luo Yuan's fully exerted his aura, everyone retreated, their faces going white as a sheet of paper. Although they had moved more than ten meters away, they were shocked to feel their hearts still beating at a maddening pace.

Under the exertion of the oppressive aura, the opponent could no longer hide. The scenery had twisted slightly, and Luo Yuan's Sensory Perception quickly caught it, making him act immediately. He tiptoed, crouching almost at ground level, and launched himself forward fast, like an arrow leaving the bow.

His terrific speed produced a cyclone of dust directly behind him. The ten-meter distance was very close, and he reached it in only a second. The Zhanmadao was radiating a sharp glimmer that pierced through the air in that direction, twisting like lightning. The delusive surrounding scenery abruptly collapsed, exposing a seven-meter tall giant covered in green hair.

When Luo Yuan saw the giant, he was slightly shocked. His shock, however, lasted for only a second before he quickly retrieved his knife so he could use it again.

The ferocious face of the giant looked panicked. It seemed like it could not react to the sudden attack. Within seconds, its blood-red eyes had suddenly brightened.

Seeing the light, Luo Yuan felt a throb in his heart. He doubted that a sheer layer of Will could defend him against this mysterious attack. Therefore, he moved and turned nimbly towards the giant's back, holding the Zhanmadao with an underhand grip and pulling as he targeted the giant's thigh.

The skin of the giant was so tough that when the knife cut into it, it got sandwiched between layers of muscles, making it difficult to move it any further. However, the cut was sufficient to cause the creature pain.

The giant howled in anguish and fear, the red light in its eyes no longer visible.

The fight had just started. Luo Yuan moved around the giant briskly, swishing his knife around and cutting off pieces of flesh. In just a second, Luo Yuan had cut the giant more than ten times while simultaneously dodging its moves. The legs of the giant were already bleeding profusely.

The giant was not slow, nor did it have slow reflexes. It was its body size that limited its movement. It was like a man wanting to catch a rat, but not being able to do anything.

The giant screamed and howled fearfully while both of its legs stepped violently on the ground. Soon the highway had become bumpy and rough, gravel spattering as if the giant was trying to stomp an annoying rat to death, but to no avail.

Finally, it tried to escape, but Luo Yuan got to it and chopped off the tendons on its legs, causing the creature to fall to its knees, shaking the ground.

Before it was able to stand up again, Luo Yuan kicked it hard at the back of its kneecaps, and it fell back down.

Even though it was kneeling on the ground, it was still about two meters tall. Luo Yuan trod upon its kneecap once again, his strong force preventing the giant from standing up. Luo Yuan jumped onto its back and moved to its head, holding its hair and pulling it

so the giant was looking upwards before he aimed the glimmering point of the Zhanmadao at its temple.

The next moment, he stabbed it, his sword piercing through the giant's head.

The giant trembled intensely for a moment. The red light from its eyes hit the ground and stirred up the dust before it slumped down on the ground again, breathless.

Chapter 184: Afterglow

From start to finish the whole battle had taken less than thirty seconds, yet Luo Yuan was sweating profusely as if he had just come out of a sauna.

It might have looked like he had killed the giant effortlessly, but he had just taken advantage of its weak points. Frankly speaking, the giant had been terrifying.

The mysterious camouflaging power and the attacking power of its eyes were significantly different from that of ordinary mutated beasts'. It was like the giant had been able to evolve, and its ability to hide had managed to cheat Luo Yuan's Sensory Perception. Luo Yuan had never faced a similar situation before.

After all, the theories behind Sensory Perception and the naked eye were very different. Hiding in the dark uses an optical illusion to cheat the eyes, but it could never do so against Sensory Perception. Nevertheless, he had not been able to see nor find the giant, even though it had been standing right next to him. If Luo Yuan's oppressive aura had not forced it into giving itself away, the battle would have ended before it had even started.

As for its mysterious attacking power, although Luo Yuan had not come into direct contact with it, the feeling of impending death he had felt still made him feel lingering fear as he recalled it. It had been so dangerous, that he felt like he had just come back from the threshold of death.

As soon as the battle ended, everybody rushed over.

“Are you alright?” Huang Jiahui asked worriedly. When she saw Luo Yuan nod, she looked relieved. “I was so scared. How on earth could such a creature even exist?”

Looking both curious and afraid, Huang Jiahui sized up the giant’s corpse. “Is it a mutated human? It's just so... so big.”

The giant's body lay on the floor, covering an area of about seven meters, its limbs looking big and strong. It was still exuding a horrific aura, even though it was dead. Its whole body was hairy, but the hair on its head was rather thin. There was also a short, thick, dark green horn on its head, but what attracted people's attention was the polished stone necklace hanging in front of its chest.

It was an obvious sign of intelligence. Other than a mutated human, no other mutated beast would have been able to design such a thing.

“Why do I feel that it’s somehow different?” Luo Yuan had hesitated for a short moment before adding, “Now matter how mutated a person is, they should still maintain some human characteristics, just like Cheng Xianfeng does. This creature is too different from a man. It has to be a mutated beast.”

“You're probably right.” Cao Lin dared not go near it, so she merely pointed at the giant's limbs as she said, “Look, it only has four fingers. Its toes are the same too.”

Everyone soon found more proof. The giant had six breasts, a short tail that has yet to decompose and two nostrils without any indication of a nose on its face.

The atmosphere was chilling. Nobody said a single word, and everyone looked shocked and afraid.

“Would you go check on Zhao Yali?” Wang Xianguang asked Luo Yuan, breaking the silence.

Luo Yuan sighed and nodded as he sprinted towards her.

Zhao Yali was squatting beside the corpse of Lao Huang, sobbing. She was touching its body, which was gradually getting colder, tears streaming down her face uncontrollably.

Luo Yuan walked to her side and squatted down. “Are... are you alright?” he asked softly after hesitating for a moment. He knew that Lao Huang had always been by her side since the beginning of the apocalypse. It was because of its loyalty and protection that she had safely survived to that day. She considered that beast her dearest relative.

Zhao Yali finally broke down. She hugged Luo Yuan and bawled, making everyone sad.

The few women around were all moved, their eyes turning red as tears slid down their faces.

Luo Yuan touched Lao Huang, who was already stiff. He felt uneasy as he sighed. "Let's look at it for the last time. We'll bury it later."

Zhou Yicheng seemed as if he wanted to say something, but he kept his mouth shut when he noticed everyone's condition.

Naturally, the giant lizard took care of digging a hole at the slope of the nearby hill. This time, it did not try to escape as it had before. In fact, it took the initiative to dig the large hole on the hillside, as if the death of Lao Huang had affected its emotions too. It got extraordinary quiet and did not show a single sign of impatience.

After throwing Lao Huang into the hole and covering it with gravel, the giant lizard lowered its head and smelled the grave before it looked up and howled loudly as if it was sending Lao Huang off.

Zhao Yali was still bawling. Lao Huang's death had hurt her deeply.

The gravestone was a piece stone about three meters tall. After getting Zhao Yali's permission, Luo Yuan wrote, "The Grave of the Loyal Lao Huang."

When it was over, the giant lizard did something that shocked everyone. It ran towards the side of the dead giant and tore open its stomach, its inner organs dropping out on the ground before

the lizard gorged on them.

The scene was so bloody that the few kids around went as white as a sheet and turned their eyes away.

Huang Jiahui pulled at Luo Yuan. The beast had been human-shaped, so she was afraid that the giant lizard might think it was allowed to eat humans now. Luo Yuan did not stop it, though. The death of Lao Huang seemed to have greatly stimulated it. When it had eaten all the inner organs, it finally stopped.

Luo Yuan chased the lizard away and walked towards the head of the giant, cutting the small horn off its head with the sword's glimmering light. The small dark green horn had drawn Luo Yuan's attention from the moment he had seen it. Next, he dug out the giant's eyes. He thought the eyes could have unique properties considering that they could mysteriously attack others. He had no interest in the beast's bones and flesh, though.

This wasn't because the beast had been man-shaped, and therefore taboo. After all, nobody thought of such nonsense anymore after surviving the apocalypse for so long. All things could be eaten provided that they were not human or toxic. In fact, he didn't take it because the flesh's raw smell would cause them trouble along the way, and they still needed to keep moving.

The giant rock had been knocked off, so cleaning up the road had gotten a lot easier. Within 30 minutes, the giant lizard had opened up a path that it could walk through.

Everyone climbed on it again and continued their journey.

The rain had stopped, and the moonlight glimmered through layers of dark clouds, producing a little light among the darkness.

Traces of villages could be seen along the way. Collapsed walls, broken glazed tiles, and eroded bricks were hidden among the trees, flickering as the group passed by quickly. As time passed, they could see even more traces of buildings along the road. Rotting high-rise buildings were becoming a common occurrence.

The sea-level was rising fast. Some lower buildings and parts of the highway were all submerged in water.

“Have we reached the suburbs yet?” Huo Dong said uncertainly, looking at the unrecognizable city, which was mostly submerged in water.

“It looks like we have. I used to come here before.” Wang Xianguang said as she took a closer look.

Luo Yuan stood up and looked ahead. Other than the high-rise buildings that were barely standing, the whole view was a vast expanse of white. There was water everywhere. As he wondered whether the military base was still intact, his face turned sour.

Zhou Yicheng seemed to have guessed Luo Yuan's thoughts. He had the soldier beside him help him up as he said, “We are near the sea. The military base is not located here, but at the district's

highest point, the Baoshan Area. It can't have been affected by the flood yet. However, we don't have much time. Given the current situation, they must be preparing to retreat. We have to get there as soon as possible.”

Luo Yuan nodded with a heavy heart.

He took over the map from Zhou Yicheng and observed it carefully. The Baoshan Area was about 30 to 40 kilometers away from there. Fortunately, they were in an urban area and thus would not have to stop due to collapses and blockage. Furthermore, the wave of beasts had already been eliminated by the flood. The journey would be difficult, but they might be able to reach their destination by the next day.

After they had left the highway, Luo Yuan realized that the water level reached the thigh of the giant lizard. It had to be around 3 to 4 meters deep already.

The vines beside the road were growing without anything to hamper it, but this was meant to be their last growth spurt. As the sea level continued to rise, they would get submerged in the sea along with the largest city in the East.

Other than some insects that were as small as grains floating on the water surface, barely any terrestrial animals could be seen. Most of them had moved to regions with higher elevation. As the giant lizard walked by, it stirred up a giant splash, dispersing the insects, who acted as if they were afraid before they quickly gathered again somewhere else.

As the giant lizard walked past a corner, Wang Shishi suddenly nudged Luo Yuan. “Look over there.”

Luo Yuan turned his head to take a look. It was a huge tree about a hundred meters high with thick branches and leaves. Other than the fact that its roots were on the surface of the water, there initially seemed to be nothing strange about it. As Luo Yuan looked at it for a longer time though, he was surprised to realize that the tree seemed to be running for its life.

It made for a bizarre image as it pulled out its roots and staggered forward as if they were legs.

Unfortunately, its movement was too slow. It took a few minutes for the tree to take a single step. Besides, without the supporting network of its roots, it was swaying all over, running the risk of stumbling at any time. Nobody knew how long it had been staggering like that, but at such slow speed, it would never be able to escape.

They all observed it in silence. As the giant lizard moved forward, the tree gradually disappeared.

A broken thirty-floor building in the distance could not fight the corrosive sea water any longer and finally collapsed. The collapse produced a ten-meter high splash on the surface of the water, its rippling effect causing even more buildings to fall.

This incident made Luo Yuan vigilant, so he had the giant lizard

walk towards an area with fewer buildings.

The buildings had been eroded down to their very foundation. Unstable as they were, a strong wind, slight quake or even a weak wave could easily destroy them.

There was lots of garbage floating on the water surface; an empty plastic water bottle was caught in an eddy and spun round and round in the water before a wave hit it and thrown somewhere far away. The salty, fishy smell of the sea breeze that permeated the atmosphere made everyone feel as if they were walking by the seashore. As Luo Yuan looked at the cluttered city, he felt that the destruction of civilization had transformed the world.

In fact, he was right.

None of them spoke along the way. They were just looking in silence at the afterglow of the doomed city, which had once been the most prosperous city in China.

Chapter 185: Arrival

They did not encounter any new dangers along the way, and Luo Yuan was slightly relieved.

He rummaged in his pocket, taking out the things he had taken from the giant: a small dark, green horn and a pair of elastic eyeballs the size of an egg.

The small horn had a smooth surface that looked crystal clear and felt like warm jade in his hand. It looked extraordinary.

Luo Yuan used the identification technique on it.

“Green Hidden Creature's Sharp Horn”

“Rarity: Light Green.”

“Weight: 500 grams”

“Additional Properties: 1. Absorbs various energy waves;

2. Creates visual illusions.”

“Remarks: The Green Hidden Creature is a creature with low-intelligence. It is a killer in the dark, a mysterious creature not known to most people. It can hide and disappear under any circumstances, and neither ultrasonic waves nor the naked eye can

detect it, all thanks to its small horn.”

“So that’s the reason why,” Luo Yuan thought to himself. The reason why his Sensory Perception had not been able to detect the giant was this small horn.

While he held the horn in his hand, he could see it with his eyes, but he could not sense it. It was rather strange, actually. Its effective range did not just include the horn itself. The horn's touch had also wrapped around his whole body, creating a dead zone within his Sensory Perception range.

It was another method the horn used to hide. However, he had no idea how it created visual illusions. He would have to test it further to find out.

Nevertheless, Luo Yuan was still delighted.

He was not the only one to have Sensory Perception. Every evolved person and mutated beast had it, although some individuals or creatures' Sensory Perception might be stronger or weaker than others'. The ability to hide oneself from other creatures' Sensory Perception would help a lot in assassinating or hiding from potential danger. Besides, not all mutated beasts observed using their eyes. Some of them, such as bats, used ultrasonic waves. If he encountered such a beast, he would have an advantage over it if he used that ability before the battle.

Next, he identified the giant's eyeballs.

“Green Hidden Creature's Eyeballs”

“Usage: Food Ingredient”

“Rarity: Light Green”

“Weight: 100 grams”

“Additional Properties: 1. Slightly enhances human eyesight;

2. Gives the eyes a certain chance to evolve.”

“Remarks: This is the eyeball of the Green Hidden Creature. The Green Hidden Creature can shoot deadly beams through its eyes and wipe off one’s spirit. Its eyeball is also a rare medicine. Consuming it could greatly enhance your eyesight and give you a certain chance to experience an unusual evolution.”

Both things had strong effects, and their value was much higher than that of regular light green level beasts.

However, Luo Yuan was still feeling depressed. The words “low-intelligence being” were still circling in his mind like a bone down his throat.

This was not good news. The appearance of an intelligent species, even though it was only a low-level one, would only worsen the already dangerous conditions that the humans were facing.

Luo Yuan's face became serious as he looked at the two eyeballs. He took one, put it in his mouth and chewed it. Some liquid burst out of the eyeball, although Luo Yuan could not describe its taste. He chewed for a while, and then swallowed before eating the second one.

When Chen Jiayi, who had been observing Luo Yuan, watched him casually put the two giant eyeballs into his mouth and chewed them indifferently, she was shocked. Her stomach churned, and she turned around, not daring to take another look.

Luo Yuan was not concerned about the thoughts of a little girl. After he had eaten the two eyeballs, he waited in silence for five minutes before something strange started happening to his eyes.

It began with a warm current entering them, and then his eyes became sour and itchy as if ants were nibbling on them. Luo Yuan's vision then turned blurry as if the images before his eyes were overlapping.

After fifteen minutes, the warm current in his eyes had reached its peak, and he started to experience a throbbing pain that felt a lot like burning flames. By now, the heart of an average person would have been filled with fear, and they would have started worrying that their eyes would get permanently damaged.

Luo Yuan, however, was not affected at all. He just closed his eyes and left them alone.

Half an hour later, the pain and itchiness had gone away.

Slowly, Luo Yuan opened his eyes again.

His surroundings had suddenly become very bright as if the light was glowing itself. The bright light gradually faded, and everything went back to normal.

Luo Yuan felt that like the whole world was different: dust fluttered in the air while mutated fish were swimming in the cloudy waters. Suddenly, he realized for the first time that the world was colorful and beautiful, even though it was still night.

The eyeballs had been as effective as he had expected. Luo Yuan felt that his abnormally good vision had become even better. He could now see things clearly under the dim, weak moonlight as if it was bright daylight.

Besides, he had noticed something else too.

The visible spectrum of the average person's naked eye was just between 380 nanometers and 780 nanometers, which was only a small portion of the electromagnetic spectrum.

Therefore, during the night, without the reflection of the moon or the stars, the naked eye was pretty much useless.

It was not true that there was no light at night. The problem was that those light wavelengths were usually smaller than 380

nanometers, and thus not visible to the human eye. In fact, if an object had any temperature, it persistently released electromagnetic waves. Therefore, one could use an infrared lens to observe the scenery at night.

Also, the average person could not see high-energy lights with wavelengths higher than 780 nanometers either. That kind of light was called ultra-violet light.

To Luo Yuan, each object now seemed to have two types of colors interwoven with each other; one was the moonlight reflected from the object while the other one was the invisible light produced by it.

The former was stronger and more dazzling, while the latter was very weak, looking as if it could be extinguished at any time. This meant that Luo Yuan could still see things in the complete darkness, and could also identify the temperature of each object by their difference in color.

This was actual night-vision.

Unfortunately, he'd only had two eyeballs. Perhaps his eyes could evolve even further if he got himself some more, Luo Yuan thought silently.

Nevertheless, he knew that it would be pure luck before he would come across a beast like this again. Plus, the giant was not a creature that he could kill easily. He could fail miserably if he were not careful.

Although the seawater had covered more than half of Hucheng City, its depth was still shallow, so there were no stronger marine beasts around yet. The terrestrial mutated beasts had already migrated, so no forces were occupying any part of Hu City.

As a result, they did not encounter any danger along the way.

After they had traveled for two hours, the water surface started becoming smaller, and they even saw exposed ground surface.

By that time, it was already 2 a.m. The area was so silent that they could not even hear the sounds of insects or the howling of the beasts that they had become familiar with.

Zhou Yicheng was sitting up, holding the map and observing it. As they got closer to their destination, he grew more impatient; his breathing was faster and continuous as he murmured, “Almost there, almost there... We’re going home.”

The soldiers were helping him carefully. Fortunately, they were not in a rush, and the speed of the giant lizard was not fast. Otherwise, Zhou Yicheng would have fallen off.

Luo Yuan realized that his mental condition was a bit off. He grew worried as he looked at his weak body. He would probably slip off and fall if the wind blew too hard.

Wang Shishi pursed her lips. She could not help but say, “You

told us that we were almost there half an hour ago. Why are you repeating it? Honestly, when are we going to get there?”

“Shut up,” Luo Yuan said, staring at her.

Grinning, Wang Shishi turned around to show him the back of her head. If this had been before, her eyes would have probably turned red and she would have burst into tears. As her strength increased though, her fear towards Luo Yuan decreased. Scolding her like this was no longer effective. Wang Shishi did not act as cute as she used to anymore.

“This time we’re really close. We’ll be there soon.” Zhou Yicheng’s mouth was trembling. His face was blushing as his fingers swiped excitedly back and forth over the map. Suddenly, he swiped too hard, leaving a few scratches on the map before he pressed on a certain place. “It’s right here. This should be it. Eight more kilometers... No, five more kilometers.”

As they heard him, they all got excited and worried at the same time.

“Battalion Commander Zhou, what do you think? Will they let us enter?” Huo Dong said carefully after a while. Most civilians were in awe of military bases, even more so of the secret military base built following the enemy’s infiltration of the community.

“They should let us in. We are the survivors after all,” Wang Xianguang said uncertainly.

“Soldiers have to obey orders. Besides, they’re supposed to be transporting equipment, not saving survivors. If they turn us away, what are we going to do?” Huang Jiahui said worriedly.

“It’s still too early to discuss this. We’ll cross that bridge when we get there,” Luo Yuan said firmly, glancing at Zhou Yicheng.

At Luo Yuan’s glance, Zhou Yicheng suddenly realized that these people were not ordinary civilians. If the military base turned them away, they could initiate a terrifying battle.

He did think it was a possibility, but until then, he had been consciously denying the issue. He had been seriously underestimating Luo Yuan and his team’s strength.

As he thought of Luo Yuan’s speed, which was so fast, he had not even been able to see his figure while he had been fighting the green giant, Zhou Yicheng started trembling.

As they reached the road to the rural area, they could finally see the rolling hills up ahead.

Apparently, the secret military base was located somewhere among those hills.

It was obvious, judging by the recently built tar road and the black tire marks on its surface.

The defense had also been fortified by posts filled with gun tubes,

which had been built at very short distance intervals.

Spotted from afar, an enormous tube turned quickly towards the giant lizard. The soldiers had probably seen the people sitting on it and thus held their fire. However, that was still enough to make everyone's faces white as a sheet. Even Luo Yuan broke out in cold sweat; he sure did not want to be shot by a cannon.

Soon, an army car came out from the post and stopped at a location about ten meters away from the giant lizard. Two fully-armed soldiers wearing night vision goggles jumped out of the car fast and made a hand sign, asking them to get down from the lizard.

Luo Yuan hesitated for a while before he ordered the giant lizard to lie down so they could get off.

“Which battalion you are in, and where are you coming from?” As they noticed the army uniforms Zhou Yicheng and some others were wearing; the soldiers became more friendly than they had been a moment ago.

Zhou Yicheng broke loose from the soldiers supporting him and made a precise military salute. “We are survivors of the 21st Army, 18th Special Force, 312th Battalion; I am the Major and Battalion Commander, Zhou Yicheng.”

“We salute you, Head of our comrades!” the two soldiers replied solemnly with a military salute.

“Lieutenant Comrades, please don't call me head yet. It's a shame. Just Battalion Commander Zhou will do.” Zhou Yicheng waved his hands as he smiled bitterly. “The conditions in Jiangnan Province were too miserable, and the whole 21st army was completely broken up. We are here asking for your help.”

The faces of the two soldiers became more solemn as respect flickered in their expressions. One of them said, “Battalion Commander Zhou, you must be tired after such a long journey. Welcome home. The others must be the survivors; it must have been hard getting here. We'll get a car to bring you in.”

The whole process was unbelievably smooth, yet also right and proper. Other than requesting that the giant lizard stay somewhere down the hill, the soldiers did not say anything else. They just had them board a truck and depart towards the military base.

The hills surrounding the area were bald. They had obviously been cleaned thoroughly repeatedly.

The truck had been driving for less than ten minutes when the road suddenly became very wide, its foundation becoming thicker. Several roads went over the hillside, supported by a massive bridge pier. The road had rough signs all the way up the hillside.

Looking at it from there, they saw a huge hole dug out of the hillside. All the earth in it had been removed.

However, what had attracted their attention were the unbelievably thick, large tire marks and the surrounding, strongly

fortified defense. When Luo Yuan saw the watchtowers built every 100 meters and the missiles launching trucks at the end of the road, his hair stood on end.

“This is the runway for the transport plane. You can all board the plane for the next departure,” a soldier on guard explained as he saw Luo Yuan and everyone else looking around curiously.

Chapter 186: Intimidation

The truck soon stopped at the opening of a huge cave approximately sixty to seventy meters wide.

All the passengers got off and followed the group into the cave. Inside it was a huge hall with dozens of heavy-duty trucks on the side, like soldiers arranged into two rows. In front of them were twelve more medium-sized tanks. The hall was roughly several thousand square meters. It felt almost as if they had arrived at a town square.

Luo Yuan noticed that at the end of the square was a huge iron gate, but he had no idea what was behind it.

In addition to this hall, there were five or six passageways nearby; obviously, there were other rooms in the area. The construction of the site was undoubtedly a vast project.

Everyone looked around in interest, sizing up everything with a shocked expression.

Truthfully, compared to the current power of the country, this was nothing. The modern machinery was highly efficient. If this had been before the apocalypse, the prefecture-level administration could have built several similar military bases in a year without affecting the local community. However, the mutation outbreak and the infiltration of the enemy deep within the community had made it really difficult to guard against the beasts. The high efficacy of modern weapons, though, would not

allow mankind to be so easily defeated.

A group of soldiers led the group into one of the passageways. After several twists and turns, they finally stopped before a door guarded by a sentry.

One of the soldiers went forward to negotiate with the man before he turned around and told Zhou Yicheng, "Battalion Commander, our leader has woken up. He would like to see you, please."

Zhou Yicheng nodded and then took a glance at Luo Yuan. When he knocked on the door, he heard a low voice say, "Come in." He went into the room, and the door closed once again.

"Army comrades, follow me. I will make arrangements for your food and lodging," said one of the lieutenants before leading the soldiers away.

"The rest of you, follow me," said a second lieutenant.

They all followed a few military men to an office. Several soldiers were lined up against the walls in single file. Even though they were not moving at all, they exuded a deadly aura that terrified the men.

This was undeniably to intimidate them. Except for Luo Yuan, everybody else had turned pale. Even Wang Shishi looked frightened.

The lieutenant sized up the group before he said solemnly, "The country regrets that we were not able to come to your rescue. I know you are harboring anger and resentment. Surely, many terrible things must have happened to you. Nevertheless, this was unavoidable as the country's resources are limited. Too many cities have been destroyed, so there was no way that we could have protected every inch of the country."

"Everyone that has been able to get here must consider themselves extremely lucky. Given the circumstances, we are preparing to withdraw in a few days' time."

Luo Yuan's expression changed slightly. He could not help but think of the numbers of days remaining for his mission. The coincidence had him thinking.

The eagle-eyed lieutenant swept through the crowd as he went on, "Now I will talk about some things that you need to pay attention to. There have previously been some unpleasant incidents that have critically endangered the military base, causing major damages and delayed our rescuing efforts, which is why these instructions need to be followed strictly."

"Number one, you must abide by all military regulations. You shall not fight. Offenders will be expelled and those who resist will be executed."

"Number two, you shall not wander around the base, except for the designated areas. There will be a warning the first time, but

you will be expelled if it occurs more than once.”

“Number three, on special occasions, the military has the authority to enlist anyone.”

“These are our only requests for civilians. I hope that everyone can obey them. I know that some of you here must have evolved.” He glanced at the people among the survivors who looked conspicuous. Any survivors that were not as thin as skeletons were usually covered in sores and dressed in shabby clothes, their faces looking fatigued. Nevertheless, everyone in this group apart from the children had a rosy complexion and was neatly dressed. Compared to other survivors, they stood out like fireflies in the darkness.

“To be able to survive up till this moment, I am sure the lot of you must have some special abilities. You are acting like you are the boss here. Maybe you believe that with your skills and powers, you can do anything you want without any consequences.” The lieutenant’s voice grew gradually harsher as a sneer formed on the corner of his mouth. “I have seen a lot of people like that, people looking to cause trouble. They all have either gotten expelled or executed. Consider yourselves warned. I hope that you are not like them, so behave accordingly. ”

The officer evidently was not fond of evolved people or evolved civilians, even to the point of disgust. One could easily tell by his facial expression.

Several of them cast a furtive glance at Luo Yuan while Huang Jiahui tightened her grip on his hand.

Luo Yuan knew what she was thinking; he felt like laughing. Perhaps his prolonged time in a position of authority had accidentally given the wrong impression to the others. After all, he was no longer the hot-blooded youth he used to be, who had taken offense at even the smallest of insults. He still wanted to hitch a ride with the military back to the reconstruction area, so he could not afford to offend the officer over such a trivial matter. If there was a need to be tough, he would be tough, and if he needed to be soft, he would be soft too.

Plus, what the officer had said was right. People had been living in total disorder and desperation for a long time. Morally deprived as they were, a lot of people's mind and spirit had gotten twisted, especially those of evolved humans. They had lost themselves in their powers and felt that they were superior to others. They regarded the rules and regulations as constraints and people as mere straws. Even Luo Yuan himself had more or less felt that way, but that had been the result of making an effort to restrain and control his powers.

After intimidating them, the lieutenant didn't try to stimulate them any further. He just led them to the dormitories and gave them two keys, one for the women's and one for the men's dormitories. As soon as he told them about the activity area, he quickly departed with his soldiers. He didn't even confiscate their weapons or luggage.

This made Luo Yuan realize that even though the reconstructed area was theoretically a restoration of the old community, it certainly was not the same community as before.

The dormitory was styled like a workers dormitory, except it was a lot bigger in size. Inside it there were 24 upper and lower bunk beds, all bare and unembellished. A lot of the beds were unoccupied; Luo Yuan looked around and noticed that approximately fifteen or sixteen people were already staying in the room.

Through the glass window on the door, Luo Yuan looked into the rooms one after the other. Besides the women's dormitory on the left side, all the other rooms were empty. There was not a single person in them.

No wonder that the military base had been so lenient in accepting survivors. It was because survivors in the fallen cities were becoming less and less. The ability to stay alive was small to begin with, and the people who had the courage to travel all the way there were even fewer. Considering that any free space in the huge transporting vehicles was filled with equipment, taking on survivors as passengers was merely en passant.

After the soldiers had left, a few of the men exhaled a sigh of relief.

“Did you notice that their guns looked unusual? The guns' calibers looked larger, very different from the 95 style.” Huo Dong had noticed because he was frequently in contact with guns, and thus naturally more sensitive to picking up such changes.

“I caught a glimpse of them just now. The calibers had to be

around 15 to 17 mm, the military must have modified them.” Huang Jiahui looked grim; she used to use firearms, and was more knowledgeable on the subject than Huo Dong. “The gun's recoil force must be large; a normal person wouldn't be able to use it. The force of the previous guns had probably been too small because the enemies had been humans. Regardless of the bullet size or the type of the handgun, as long as it could shoot to kill, there was no point in worrying about the bullet force. However, a 95-type diameter only has 5.8 mm and an effective range of four hundred meters. If they didn't use special bullets, they would not have much of a chance against blue level mutated beasts.”

“It would be great if I could get one,” Huo Dong exclaimed. He thought that kind of gun would be fun to use.

“You keep dreaming. You should consider yourself lucky that they didn't confiscate your weapon,” said Lin Xiaoji.

“F*ck you! You guys are so loud! Would you just let us rest?” a loud, angry voice called out from inside the dormitory.

Everyone was surprised for a moment, their faces turning sour as they consciously turned to Luo Yuan.

Luo Yuan chuckled and waved them off. “Talking so loud would definitely affect anyone trying to rest. I think we're all tired after a whole day of traveling. Let's go to sleep. If there's anything to talk about, we'll discuss it tomorrow.”

Chapter 187: Acquaintance

The dormitory had no lights, but the corridor was lit, so everyone was able to see.

However, not long after entering, several people's expressions turned to dismay.

All upper bunks were basically occupied, and the lower bunks were littered with trash.

The smelly skins, tattered cloth sacks, pots and pans, and mouldy, dirty clothes made the whole dormitory exude an unidentified, unusual odour.

The soldiers had left the survivors completely to themselves, without any proper management, and as a result there were no available beds now.

Luo Yuan had long since noticed the situation, but had chosen not to make a fuss about it. However, Huo Dong and Lin Xiaoji looked increasingly unhappy about the situation.

Seeing that the two of them were agitated and about to start a fight, Luo Yuan quickly stopped them, saying, "Well, it's already really late. It would be hard to communicate, so let's just move some stuff to the floor and get some rest."

It was not that Luo Yuan was afraid of trouble. He was just too

lazy to be bothered. They were mentally exhausted from the day they'd had, and that in combination with his intense earlier fighting had left him tired and fatigued. He was totally ready to have the night off. Plus, causing any problems in the military base would only mean trouble for them, so it would be better to let it pass.

At Luo Yuan word's, the two men held back their dissatisfaction. However, their seething annoyance was still evident through their rough actions.

As the trash was put on the floor, some noise was inevitable. In the middle of the night, noises sounded particularly deafening, and were able to awaken even the most soundly asleep survivors.

Barely a few seconds later, a tall figure jumped down from an upper bunk, the man's face filled with anger as he began to spill out profanities, "F*ck you, what are you doing? My words seem to have fallen on deaf ears! You want to get beaten up, don't you?"

The man who was cursing had a towering figure, slightly taller than two meters, possibly around two point two, and his entire body was ripped with muscles. Perhaps he had once been a bodybuilder. His head was shaved bald, but the uneven shaving made his scalp appear patchy.

Apart from him, the rest of the survivors remained still. Perhaps this person was a troublemaker, or perhaps the rest of them preferred to stay out of trouble.

Before Luo Yuan could react though, the following comical scene made Huo Dong and Lin Xiaoji's jaws drop.

Before the apocalypse, the towering man with the aggressive, vicious attitude would have probably belonged in a prison cell. He met all the criteria for a most wanted criminal, and he would no doubt have been the best candidate for the position of a crime lord. Barely a second later though, the man's facial expression changed dramatically. He looked almost unnatural as he said, "You... are you Brother Luo?"

Luo Yuan looked at him in confusion. He looked rather familiar, but the memory of the man's image and the person before him were vastly different. Luo Yuan asked, "And you are?"

"I am Fatty Xie!" The guy calling himself Fatty Xie scratched his head and shyly said, "I'm the man that ran the illegal trading business by the Hedong City dump site. Don't you remember?"

"You... you are Boss Xie? How did you become like this?" Although Luo Yuan was stunned by the changes in the man's appearance, there was undeniably still some resemblance to Boss Xie. However, Boss Xie had previously been only 1.70 meters tall, and so stout that he hadn't even able to run a few steps without needing to catch his breath. Now his body was two meters tall, and his muscles were as defined as a bodybuilder's. It really was a big transformation.

"Please call me Fatty Xie. That's what my friends call me. If I didn't say anything, no one would even recognize me now." As he said this, the man looked helpless. "I am like this is because of the

evolution process. If it wasn't for these changes in my appearance, I would not even have survived this long."

Meeting someone familiar was always a pleasant occurrence, especially now when they didn't even know how many of their acquaintances were still alive. Luo Yuan was no longer in a hurry to go to bed. "How did you get here? When did you arrive?"

"It's a long story. When Hedong City was attacked, I first headed to East Lake. Later, when my business friends told me that East Lake was unsafe, I followed a group of people to Hucheng City. However, Hucheng City was not able to hold off the attacks either. Besides, I was not familiar with the people or the place. I basically had no connections, and money is of no use there. You know that I wasn't some important person. I was only doing some light trading, so I was not eligible for the first retreat mission, nor for the second one. The third mission came too late. Hucheng City had already collapsed, and the mission was delayed."

"That night, when I was not paying attention, my wife took our kids and jumped off a building."

"I drifted around for some time, eating whatever I could find. I even ate drain rats. Every day I hid myself, until inexplicably one day I suddenly evolved. If I hadn't, I would have been inside the stomach of a mutated beast by now. About ten days ago, I saw a helicopter fly by and I followed it all the way here." Fatty Xie wiped his face, spit a little phlegm, and pointed at Luo Yuan with his thick finger. "But enough about me. What about you?"

Although Fatty Xie was not gentle by any means, at least he was

friendly. He was smiling at everyone and he had good manners. It seemed that the apocalypse had changed him a lot.

“No one wished for this. Otherwise, they would not have come here.” Luo Yuan sighed as he thought of the tragic deaths of Huang Yuying and Ning Xiaoran. Then he looked at Deng Wei and Zhong Chuqiang. The two tough children were trying hard to stay awake by the corner, despite the fact that they were yawning nonstop. Luo Yuan said, “It's late now. Let's talk more tomorrow. We still have plenty of time.”

“Alright, you guys can choose whichever bed you want and throw everything onto the floor. These people are a bunch of cowards. They wouldn't mess with me, even if you gave them the courage. I'm going back to sleep,” said Fatty Xie roughly, completely oblivious to Lin Xiaoji's disdainful face.

He turned his body swiftly on the bed, and the metal frame suddenly gave out an agonizing groan. Fatty Xie got comfortable, completely oblivious to everyone else's comfort.

Luo Yuan noticed that the others had not moved an inch. It was as if they had not heard anything. It seemed that he fit in really well there.

Luo Yuan chose a relatively clean bed, threw the trash onto the floor, spread the sleeping bag, and got into bed. Suddenly, his mind and heart felt calmer. The military base gave him a sense of security. There was no need to worry about unexpected danger or remain half-asleep. Most importantly, they didn't have to worry about where they would go the next day, or whether there was

anything terrible waiting for them.

Luo Yuan did not even take a look at his completed task. He fell into a deep sleep right away.

The next morning, he was awakened by the noise of other people waking up. When he opened his eyes, he no longer felt sleepy. Instead, he felt surprisingly better. Just a few short hours of sleep had completely replenished his energy.

“Brother Luo, you're up! Let's go have breakfast together,” said Fatty Xie loudly as he jumped down from his bed.

“There's breakfast?” Luo Yuan asked curiously.

“Of course there is. Before the apocalypse, they had stockpiled large amounts of food here. The supplies are still not finished,” said Fatty Xie casually while giving Luo Yuan a strong pat on the shoulder.

Since the beginning of the apocalypse, no one had dared pat Luo Yuan's shoulder. He felt a little odd, but he adjusted to the change quickly. He did not shy away. He allowed Fatty Xie to put his hand on him, and slightly lowered his shoulder to diffuse the force of the impact. “Haven't eaten a normal meal in a long time. I don't even remember what it tastes like. But I still have my friends with me. Let's wait until everyone is up before we go.”

Surprise flashed across Fatty Xie's face. Although he had not used

his full force, a normal person would still have struggled under this strength. He had expected Luo Yuan to not even be able to budge, let alone shrug his pat off so casually.

In fact, he had known right from the start that Brother Luo was no ordinary man. Otherwise, he would not have been such a popular figure within the dump site community that even Fatty Xie himself would have to call him Boss Luo. Yet, Fatty Xie was not the guy that he used to be anymore. He was no longer the smiley Fatty Xie. Ever since he had evolved, his strength had increased tremendously, and his defence had gotten so abnormally strong, that even in his normal form he could still tear a third rank mutated beast apart. He had even killed a fourth rank beast when he had been in his special form. Luo Yuan's earlier skills and strength were insignificant in his eyes, which naturally gave him a contemptuous attitude.

Fatty Xie laughed raucously as he said, "Are they your little brothers and sisters?"

"You could say that," Luo Yuan said casually, his attention fully focused on the mission board. The previous day, he had been too relaxed and had neglected to check it. When he did this morning after he woke up, he discovered that his level had increased. Not only had he levelled up, but the giant lizard had also followed suit.

"Current Mission: B Level Mission; escort a group of soldiers to the Hucheng City secret military base".

"Mission Requirement: The number of soldiers, including Zhou Yicheng, should not be lower than six."

“Time Limit: One Week”

“Mission Status: Completed”

“Evaluation: Good”

“Character: Luo Yuan”

“Level of Completion: 90%”

“Basic Reward EXP +9,600*90%!”

“Evaluation: Excellent, EXP +4,800*90%!”

“EXP: 5,520/76,800!”

“Battle Beast: Giant Lizard”

“Level of Completion: 10%”

“Basic Reward EXP +9,600*10%”

“Evaluation: Good, EXP +4,800*10!”

“Experience: 1,140/19,200!”

The giant lizard had not contributed much to this task, so the majority of the experience gained had gone to Luo Yuan, allowing him to level up with an excess of 5,000 points, which had made the level-up a lot smoother.

Looking at his remaining Attribute Point and 6 Skills Points, he suddenly felt his emotions surge. Now that he had finally levelled up, his strength would increase once again.

He looked at all his attributes; the majority were higher than 14 points. Only his 13-point Strength and Intelligence caught his attention. He glanced at his Intelligence before immediately looking at his Strength. The weakness of his Strength had been evident during the last battle, consequentially affecting his 14-point Dexterity, which was not able to be fully utilized. He had always felt that this attribute was unnecessary. Therefore, he had long decided that the next increase would be in his Strength.

Perhaps he had been contemplating it for a long time, or perhaps his state of mind was more relaxed that day, but Luo Yuan automatically added the points.

Suddenly, Fatty Xie felt an oppressive aura in the room. As if by instinct, he quickly turned to Luo Yuan, who was now emanating the aura of an enormous, terrifying beast. Everyone's faces turned pale. Some people retreated carefully, while others slumped down on the floor, unintentionally soiling themselves and producing a smelly odour. The people that were still lying in bed seemed paralysed. They were unable to move their bodies. All they could

do was shout.

Being the closest to him, Fatty Xie was affected by the full force of his aura. He felt a great weight pressing down on him, and his forehead started to break out in cold sweat. Step by step, he retreated on the cement dirt beneath his feet. With every step he took, he left a heavy footprint on the floor. His whole body felt like a balloon being pierced. He was losing weight at a rapid pace. Meanwhile, his body released a layer of white substance, allowing himself to stabilize.

When Luo Yuan finally noticed his soaring strength and the power unconsciously emanating from his body, he quickly tried to control it. It was too late, though. The scene had become chaotic. The whole room was reeking of an unpleasant odour, and everyone was looking in Luo Yuan's direction, their eyes avoiding direct eye contact as they retreated in fear.

Fatty Xie had recovered fast. There was an unpleasant expression on his face, and his lips were trembling slightly as he stammered, "Boss Luo, you hide your abilities really well, but you're still as powerful as ever. It looks like I was being too arrogant yesterday."

Fatty Xie thought that the sole purpose of that incident was to intimidate him. He didn't dare call Luo Yuan brother anymore. Instead, he went back to calling him Boss Luo. Nonetheless, only he alone knew what he was thinking. After the conversation, he strode out right away, too ashamed to stay in the room.

Luo Yuan did not know what to say, so he just let him leave. He was only an acquaintance after all, so he wasn't feeling too guilty

about the whole incident.

The commotion had disturbed Huo Dong and Lin Xiaoji, who had woken up. The two children were also in a state of shock. However, they had been sleeping in the middle section of the room, so the effect on them had not been too big, unlike the effect on the people nearby, some of whom had even soiled their pants.

After they got up, Luo Yuan went to the women's dormitory and told Huang Jiahui and the others to come out. When the whole group was assembled, they asked for directions to the cafeteria, and headed in that direction.

Chapter 188: Training

It was a shared cafeteria. Both civilians and soldiers were sharing the same space for their meals. The survivors who had been talking stopped their conversation as soon as they saw Luo Yuan enter the cafeteria, and began to whisper instead. A few of the soldiers also began talking about him. Fatty Xie was taking up a whole table by himself. The man looked really upset, and left the place after stuffing a bun into his mouth. Luo Yuan thought he must have somehow offended everyone.

Huo Dong sneered as he watched Fatty Xie leave. He knew those people had been trying to show off until they had found out that Luo Yuan was actually a lot more powerful than them. Now they were trying to build a bond.

“If you want some bonding time with him, better make sure your brain is stronger than his Zhanmadao,” Huo Dong thought.

“What’s happening? I don’t sense anything good here,” Cao Lin told Huo Dong, pulling on his shirt a little as she stepped back.

Huo Dong shrugged and said uncertainly, “I have no idea. You could check with Brother Luo.”

Cao Lin glared at him for a second. She was definitely not going to ask Luo Yuan such a stupid question. He had such a sensitive dignity that even standing next to him made her terrified. She had been suspecting how Huang Jiahui was able to control his temper. They got in line to collect their food, which was free of charge. It

was not a luxurious breakfast, but there were buns, porridge and meat soup, which was more than enough to motivate them. The women covered their mouths as they held back their tears. The food made them too nostalgic. It brought back memories of the old days, before the mutation outbreak.

“You’re the new arrivals? Have whatever you want, don’t starve yourselves. Anyway, you guys don’t seem to have been starving for a long time. There were a few of you who died from indigestion due to excessive food intake,” the military chef told Luo Yuan and his people.

"That's sad. They must have gone through so much trouble to get here." In fact, Luo Yuan felt indifferent about those tragedies. He had simply said something just to be polite. "I'd like five buns, a bowl of porridge and some soup. By the way, what time is lunch and dinner here?"

“We’ve been quite busy recently and we’ll still be in the upcoming weeks, so there’s no set time for meals. It’s up to you. You eat whenever you want to eat.”

The man kept talking while he did his job, “There are only a few days of the good times left. Things will be different after we’re past the rehabilitation area. They’re going to implement planned economy policies. Food supply will be based on tickets. In other words, you won’t ever feel full, but you won’t die either.”

Finally, they got their food, split into two groups and sat down. The survivors sitting beside their table quickly finished up their food and left. Obviously, that was a side effect of the earlier

incident.

“Cowards!” Lin Xiaoji could not bear it. He took a big bite on his bun and said, “It tastes awful.”

“We should consider ourselves lucky to even have food,” Wang Xiaguang said as she recalled what the chef had said. “We might not be able to have this kind of food again after we leave. By the way, what happened earlier in the morning? I heard Cao Lin and Huo Dong talking about it.”

“I knew that something was wrong!” Huang Jiahui said. She looked at Luo Yuan and then back at Huo Dong.

Luo Yuan continued eating his food. He did not seem keen on explaining. Huo Dong replied, “Someone was trying to challenge Brother Luo, but ended up getting scared instead.”

“I thought it was something bigger.” Wang Shishi looked disappointed.

“What were you thinking then? Did you expect some killing to have taken place?” Huang Jiahui glared at her.

“Are any evolved people staying with you?” Huo Dong asked curiously.

“I'm not sure. We went to bed at around 3 a.m. and came here as soon as we woke up,” Huang Jiahui said. Then, she looked at Luo

Yuan again. He had not said a single word, and she thought that he was acting strange. He had not said anything else after talking to the chef just now.

In fact, Luo Yuan did not have time to talk. He needed to focus on controlling his powers instead. For example, normal people did not need to control their strength while walking or staying still.

That did not require a lot of thinking or planning on their part. Luo Yuan, however, had to adapt to his new abilities as his powers increased.

Walking was the easiest as it did not involve a lot of muscles. Eating was the most complicated, because he needed to calculate the strength he would need to use on his chopsticks and how much pressure he needed to apply to different parts of his arm. That was why he had no time to answer their questions.

Luo Yuan needed to go through those experiences again every once in awhile. It was something new to him, but he already had the clues he needed in order to train. It usually took him 3 to 14 days to acquire a new ability.

When Luo Yuan finished all his food, he began to sweat. Once he felt better, he turned to the women, “All of you need to be more careful. Not every survivor is a good person.”

Circumstances could change a person, especially those particular ones. It was a very quiet day, so Luo Yuan kept practicing on his Will and Sensory Perception. At the same time, he was waiting for

the departure of the aircraft. Fatty Xie was not as passionate as the first time they had met anymore. He had gotten embarrassed and he always made sure to show Luo Yuan how upset he was. Luo Yuan did not give a damn about him. He only went to the training court, the cafeteria and his dormitory. Half of the training court was taken up by a shooting range and the other half was divided into training rooms, which were open to all survivors. Of course, there were some soldiers training there as well.

The new guns were extremely powerful and could smash their targets in one shot. The bullets were 7 centimeters long, heavy, and plated with copper. They could not afford to waste them, so they would recycle them after every single shot. The soldiers who had arrived at the base with Luo Yuan would talk to him with gratitude and tell him some classified information.

According to that information, Zhou Yicheng had become the new Camp Officer, although he was currently at the rehabilitation center. Apparently, the situation seemed to have subsided as everyone looked quite relaxed. Luo Yuan was learning more about himself by using the training equipment in the training court. If 13-point Strength was the human limit, then 14 points definitely made him a legend.

He could free throw 400 kg and grab 30 kg. Considering he weighed 75 kg, both achievements were far beyond the world record. Due to the space constraints, Luo Yuan could only run a short distance. He could roughly run 100 meters in three seconds.

Three seconds was the length of time it took for a complete cycle of respiration. He didn't have to hide anymore as there was an

increasing number of evolved people joining the camp. Luo Yuan had tried to keep a low profile in the past few days, because he needed to learn how to control his Strength. However, in the next few days he had started an extreme intensive training program in order to get rid of the old side effects.

Apparently, the equipment in the training court was just for strength testing, so he had to make his own intensive training program. There were many ways to conduct intensive training. For example, he could ask both Huo Dong and Lin Xiaoji to help him train at escaping bullets, or he could tell them to hit him with an iron bar so he could control his muscle strength and protect himself that way.

He could not avoid getting hurt. Every single time ended with him throwing up blood or having a bullet hole in his body. Any survivors or soldiers nearby got frightened and pale as they watched his training. Even Huo Dong and Lin Xiaoji were worried that they might hurt him, and felt relieved when Luo Yuan woke up the next morning feeling alright.

Luo Yuan realized that his power had increased once again as he kept using his Will to cure his wounds after each injury. He also realized that his power had been enhanced in just a few days' time, but he was not sure what the key factor was.

These days, he could hardly get hurt by regular guns. The bullets would just get stuck in his solid muscles once they penetrated his skin, and all he had to do was force the disfigured bullet out of his muscle fibers. That was the effect if he got shot from a short distance. Getting shot from a long distance was even less effective.

During their stay there, Luo Yuan asked permission to go out to check on the giant lizard, but the request was rejected. He decided to endure their treatment of him and see what he could do once he saw Zhou Yicheng.

A week later, four soldiers were waiting for Luo Yuan and his people at their dormitory when they came back from the cafeteria. Fatty Xie and a dirty woman were there as well.

“Our superior wants to see you,” one of the soldiers said.

Chapter 189: Recruitment

The officer wanted to see Luo Yuan, Wang Shihi, Fatty Xie and the dirty-looking woman. Apparently, they had been recruited to join the army. Huang Jiahui was stunned. She looked completely panicked.

Luo Yuan smiled and said, “Sure, but I want to talk with my friends for a minute first.”

The soldier nodded in understanding and walked out with his subordinates.

“There must be something wrong outside. You guys take good care of yourselves. We’ll check it out,” Luo Yuan said.

“You too,” Huang Jiahui replied. “Take care, Shishi. Stick by Luo Yuan while you execute the mission. Don’t just run wild,” Huang Jiahui said anxiously.

Zhao Yali hesitated before she said, “Don’t be reckless, we’ll be worrying about you.”

Luo Yuan nodded. He felt moved as he patted her. Zhao Yali immediately blushed.

“Alright, let’s talk later. Shishi, let’s go.” Luo Yuan took a deep breath, acting like this was not a big deal.

“Okay.” Wang Shishi looked quite excited as she followed Luo Yuan.

Wang Xianguang felt uneasy as she looked at his retreating back and Zhao Yali's blushing face.

A man in a colonel uniform was staring at the map of Shanghai, facing away from everyone. He turned around when he heard them enter his office.

“Hello, sir!” Fatty Xie said, trying to act smart.

The man waved and said, "You're a civilian and I'm a soldier. We do not belong in the same system. Addressing me by my name will do. You can call me Hu Haiyang or Colonel Hu. Please take a seat."

He looked like an average 40 year-old man. His lips were thin, and the corners of his mouth bent downwards, which made everyone feel respect towards him without being mad. He looked very serious even when he smiled. Wang Shishi felt nervous because he was wearing an army uniform. The number of his badges was a sign of his military power.

Luo Yuan walked to the couch with Wang Shishi and sat down. Then he said, “Colonel Hu, is there anything we can help you with?”

Colonel Hu looked at Luo Yuan for a second. He recalled Zhou Yicheng telling him to pay attention to Luo Yuan. "I have to tell

you that you have been recruited. I hope you're ready for this," he said softly.

"Since the military base is providing us with shelter and food, it's only fair that we make some kind of contribution. May I know what is going on?" Luo Yuan said with a nod. Although he could be selfish sometimes, he would never do anything unethical. Plus, this was about the safety of the country, so it was his responsibility as a citizen.

The rest of them were forced to agree since Luo Yuan had promised to help. Colonel Hu felt relieved. He had been really worried that they would refuse to obey and would try to negotiate with him. He did not have the time or desire to bargain with them given the situation. Of course, he could give them a lesson using military weapons, but that would be very risky for him considering Luo Yuan was in the room. He was surprised at how nervous he felt in Luo Yuan's presence.

"The situation is very bad. Our special team had a very hard battle against the mutated beasts. Half of our army is dead and injured, and some soldiers are still on the battlefield, waiting for rescue. We have insufficient manpower in the military base, because many teams are still out there trying to rescue soldiers in many different locations. We have received a report that other places are facing difficulties as well. It seems like this was a huge, collaborative attack."

"You'll be following the rest of the soldiers to your destination. Your mission is to rescue any soldiers that are still alive," the Colonel said.

“I have a question. Haven’t the mutated beasts migrated to the central region? How come they're still here?” Luo Yuan asked, detecting the inconsistencies in Colonel Hu's words.

“It’s the sea monsters this time. They are moving to the land,” Colonel Hu said seriously.

The room immediately became silent. Sea monsters? That was what they had always been afraid of.

Fatty Xie could not hold it anymore and said, “Sea monsters? Are you kidding me? We might as well kill ourselves.”

Perhaps he had been talking too loud, because the soldiers outside were alerted. A group of armed soldiers broke into the room and asked, "What happened, sir?"

“I’m fine. Get out and close the door,” the Colonel said with a wave of his hand.

Fatty Xie was in panic. He was sweating profusely. He had suddenly realized that he would die if he disobeyed any military rules, so he just shrugged and remained silent.

“I have a request,” Luo Yuan suddenly said.

“Tell me. I’ll try my best to fulfill it,” Colonel Hu said. He had

paid great attention to Luo Yuan's reaction when the soldiers had come in. However, he had not noticed any change in his facial expression. He thought that Luo Yuan was feeling disdain.

He had several pages of information regarding him. It was enough for him to write a book. Some of it had been provided by Zhou Yicheng, and some from the soldiers in the military base talking about his training methods. Some even said that Luo Yuan could fly. It was evident by the reports that he was a very high rank evolved person with hardly any weaknesses.

He had to be a 5th rank evolved man. The government did not care about regular evolved men. However, they paid high attention to those at level 5. The Colonel had not believed the reports initially, but he changed his mind now as he saw that Luo Yuan was brave enough to negotiate with him.

He knew there was no harm in doing him a favor considering that he might need Luo Yuan's help in the future.

"I want to bring my pet with me." Luo Yuan tried to request to bring the giant lizard along. If the Colonel refused, he would just give up. It was his only chance to go back to the rehabilitation region. If he lost the giant lizard, he could just get another one in the future.

"Your pet beast?" Colonel Hu frowned before asking hesitantly, "How big is it?"

Luo Yuan was surprised that the Colonel was even considering

his request."It's about 10 meters long and 6 meters tall. When it lies down, its height is only 3 meters. Do you think you can send it over?"

"The beast is also very important to the rehabilitation region. We have three transport jets and there's a lot of space, but your pet is slightly bigger and taller than a 40-foot container. I'll get the person in charge to modify the container, but your pet must be drugged unconscious along the way in order to reduce the risk," the Colonel said.

"Of course. Thank you so much, Colonel Hu," Luo Yuan thanked him sincerely. He knew it was not just any small favor, but a risky military decision.

"Any requests from you? I'll try my best to make them come true," Colonel Hu said. He knew that he had to be fair to the rest of them as well.

Fatty Xie seemed to be frightened. He remained stunned for a while. Wang Shishi was silent. She wanted to request to find her relatives when they returned to the rehabilitation region, but that was not in Colonel Hu's control, so he only promised to inform the relevant sectors. The girl remained silent after that. The military helicopter was ready to depart. The main rotor blades were spinning, producing a strong wind on the ground. In a few seconds, the helicopter took off and flew away from the military base.

There were many other people in the cabin. Besides Luo Yuan and the other evolved people, there were four soldiers, the pilot,

and the co-pilot. Wang Shishi was holding onto Luo Yuan's shirt as she looked around curiously. This was her first time in a helicopter. It was not a pleasant experience though, as it was a military helicopter with a very small cabin, full of a choking fuel smell. Luo Yuan took out his Zhanmadao, picked up a cloth with oil stains and slowly wiped his sword with it to reduce his stress.

“B-Level Mission: Rescue the soldiers and their equipment.”

“Mission Requirement: Rescue at least 10 people and send them back to the military base safely.”

“Mission Time: 12 hours.”

That was the reason Luo Yuan had requested to bring the giant lizard along. The risk of the mission was as high as fighting a green level mutated beast. So far, Luo Yuan had only bumped into green level mutants twice, and he had only looked at them from afar.

The first one had been the Heaven Pillar's Tree, which had been burnt by the volcanic lava, and the second one had been the Archelon, which he had not even dared get close to. Each of them had been beyond his imagination. Although Luo Yuan's power had been upgraded, he still felt stressed just at the thought.

Fortunately, he was not fighting alone anymore. He had Wang Shishi as well as two more evolved people with him. The helicopter was also a good advantage. He had noticed that there were a lot of weapons and equipment inside the cabin, such as missiles, rocket missiles, multi-tube rockets, machine guns, etc.

Considering the power of the weapons, a normal light green mutated beast would not be able to survive an attack by them.

“I feel that something is wrong somehow. This is not a good sign,” Fatty Xie said with a sigh. “I have a very accurate instinct. This is probably a very dangerous situation,” he went on.

“I think you’re just acting like a coward,” Wang Shishi said sarcastically. She knew that the bald guy did not get along well with Luo Yuan.

Fatty Xie looked at her for a second, but he did not get mad or try to challenge her. Instead, he shook his head and said, “You don’t understand.”

Luo Yuan put his Zhanmadao back into its sheath and looked at him for a second. He had not expected Fatty Xie to be sensitive enough to sense danger. He looked at the woman, who was still remaining silent, before he said, “It’s probably a very dangerous mission. I think we’ll have a better chance if we tell each other about our special powers.”

Fatty Xie nodded in agreement and said, “I’ll go first then. I’m not sure what kind of evolved power I have, but I’ve realized that there are two different modes. The first is the normal mode, and the other one is the fighting mode. My bone structure changes and my skin forms a layer of hard shell. My defense power shoots up drastically. I’ve even killed a dark blue mutated beast before.”

Luo Yuan turned to Wang Shishi, and she arrogantly said, “My power is telekinesis. I’ve also killed a dark blue mutated beast before, but I can’t remember how many exactly.”

Fatty Xie looked at her in shock. Obviously, he could not believe that a little girl could be that powerful. Even the soldiers were looking at her with a shocked expression.

“My power is the Earth Stomp. I can release a shockwave under certain circumstances. I’ve killed light green mutated beasts,” Luo Yuan briefly explained.

Finally, it was the woman's turn. She kept twisting her shirt nervously, hesitating for a while before she said, "I can control the mind. I can temporarily control a light green mutated beast."

Everyone was shocked, including Luo Yuan. The soldiers were about to pull out their guns. Mind control? That sounded like something evil. None of them had expected the woman to possess such a terrifying power. If her power continued to grow, it would certainly not be a good thing.

"Please, don't get me wrong. I can only control living things with a low level of intelligence," the woman explained with a sigh as she noticed everyone's shock. Then she returned to her own world, going silent once again.

Chapter 190: War

Her explanation was not good enough. None of them actually believed her. Luo Yuan did not believe a person could remain kind and honest after going through so many tough times in their life, especially during wartime. Just like him, most of them had not completely revealed their powers. He had not told them that he was actually very good at using a knife, or that there was a weakness to his power.

It was difficult to fully trust anyone, and the fact that the woman had the power to control minds only increased their fear of her. Wang Shishi naturally moved a little closer to Luo Yuan while she kept looking at the woman critically. The soldiers also kept looking at her in alert.

The atmosphere was obviously heavy. The Colonel suddenly said, “Mu Wenwen, I heard that you'd been brought into the base by a team. Your performance has been quite good, which shows that you're a reliable person. Power and attitude are two different things. As long as you don't break the rules, you'll be fine.”

The woman, whose name was Mu Wenwen, remained silent. She only raised her chin and looked at them, before quickly lowering it again. Her eyes were so beautiful and charming that Luo Yuan found them irresistible. He immediately warned himself when he realized that he had been captivated. That woman kept a very low profile. He had not even noticed her until the recruitment.

That was the first time he had met someone so powerful. She was even more powerful than Wang Shishi. She was not just able to

control mutated beast, but light green mutated beasts. Light green mutated beasts were horrible. Luo Yuan had only managed to kill one himself.

As he thought of the risk of the current mission, he hesitated and asked, “Ms. Mu, your power will be very helpful to us. Could you please explain some more about it so I can adjust to accommodate you?”

It would be really good if the woman could help him from time to time. Even if she could only control mutated beasts for a while, that would be enough for him to kill them. If she could also control a green mutated beast, then they basically would not have to worry about the mission anymore.

Perhaps Luo Yuan had made a good impression on her, because she was actually willing to respond this time. She did not raise her head. Instead, she said softly, "Actually, I haven't fully mastered how to control light green mutated beasts. Sometimes I'm not even able to do it when my emotions take over. I get distracted easily, and I can't control them for more than 30 seconds."

Judging by her voice, she had to be around twenty or thirty years old.

“My power is quite similar to hypnosis. Many conditions need to be met. I can do it for longer if the creature I'm trying to control is a dark blue mutated beast,” she said.

“What about a green mutated beast?” Luo Yuan’s heartbeat

became faster.

“I haven’t come across a green level mutated beast, but I think I wouldn’t be able to control it. Mind control increases the burden on my brain. I can hardly control light green mutated beasts, and green mutated beasts must be a lot scarier. I might go into a coma if I try to do that,” Mu Wenwen explained.

“In fact, the same applies to humans. We get more frustrated when we have more complex problems to solve, but we are a lot stronger than mutated beasts, so you don’t need to worry about me controlling your mind,” Mu Wenwen explained with a sigh.

“How many mutated beasts can you control?” Luo Yuan asked again. He was disappointed that she could not control green level mutated beasts.

“Only one at a time,” Mu Wenwen said.

“What about energy consumption? How many mutated beasts would you be able to control if you only needed to control them for three seconds?” Luo Yuan asked her as he thought about it.

“I’m not really sure, I’ll have to experiment. I’ve never bumped into that many light green mutated beasts before. Is that your last question?” Mu Wenwen did not think that the current mission would be as bad as Luo Yuan thought, and she started to get irritated by his endless interrogating.

“I'm just asking so we can prepare and plan for the safety of others. I hope you can fully support me later on,” Luo Yuan said as he looked into her eyes.

Mu Wenwen agreed softly and then went silent once again. Everyone thought that Luo Yuan was overthinking things. Light green mutated beasts were hard to come by. Even the soldiers had not seen that many of them. In fact, they had only killed seven light green mutated beasts and one green mutated beast in the past two months when they had decided to check on the area nearby to reduce any potential risk. The helicopter was moving very fast. They were going to reach their destination in about ten minutes.

“Everyone get ready and take your parachutes with,” the Colonel reminded them.

“The helicopter is not going to land on the ground?” Fatty Xie asked in shock.

Everyone was shocked except Luo Yuan. Jumping out of a helicopter from such a high altitude was not something anyone could accept calmly.

“This is just in case of an emergency. Get your parachutes, please. A helicopter crashed against the ground this very morning, so we need to take some safety precautions in case the sea monsters have any special powers,” the Colonel said.

Everyone felt slightly relieved, but they became nervous once again when they realized they could not see what was happening

outside.

“I can see the targeted tower. The situation is under control. I’m ready for landing, ready for landing,” the pilot said loudly.

“Hold on! There are some minor problems I need to solve,” the man on the other end replied.

The helicopter was slanting and shaking vigorously. They could hear the booming sound of weapons and the roars of mutated beasts.

“Problem solved. The coast is clear, I’m landing now,” the pilot said.

Everyone felt relieved, but Luo Yuan was still holding onto his Zhanmadao. Thirty seconds later, they had landed safely. The soldiers opened the door of the cabin and everyone disembarked quickly. The rotating blades of the helicopter started spinning once again as the helicopter flew away. They looked at what was supposed to be a lobby made of glass, with a big steel frame hanging above its roof. Luo Yuan checked their surroundings.

“Hurry up! Follow me! Where is everyone?” the Colonel said as he rushed towards the entrance.

Luo Yuan and the others followed him quickly. A booming sound came from afar along with a roar. Apparently, there was a very serious battle going on. The soldiers looked physically strong.

They were probably stronger than Huo Dong and the rest of Luo Yuan's group. Their status was around 12 points, and they were wearing some kind of protective suits as they moved at a very high speed. Luckily, Luo Yuan was holding Wang Shishi, otherwise she might not have been able to keep up.

Mu Wenwen's physical condition was quite good. She was following them closely, and so was Fatty Xie, who was fit enough to keep up with them.

They were running towards another building. The place was spacious, and a layer of cement covered the ground. It was obvious that the area had previously been a park, because they could see weeds growing at its edges. The building nearby was well-maintained. There was not much damage to it other than the glass, which was mostly broken.

"What is this place?" Luo Yuan asked.

"The computer center," the Colonel said while he gasped.

"What's that?" Wang Shishi asked. She did not understand.

"A place where all the computers are stored," the Colonel explained.

"The rehabilitation center couldn't store the computers anymore?" Wang Shishi asked in disappointment.

The Colonel did not know much about that, so he wasn't sure how to explain.

"It used to be a global supplier. A computer is actually a very complicated device, so most of its parts are imported from many different countries. However, trading has now been terminated. Although there will be a new batch of computers with a lower grade of functions, it definitely can't compete with the other ones in such a short time. In fact, all these computers are very precious. They act as a catalyst for the growth of technology, which is much more valuable than the devices themselves," Fatty Xie explained while he ran in the back.

He used to be the owner of a software company. Although he was not an expert on the industry, he was quite familiar with it and he was very observant when it came to computers. He understood the importance of computers to the technological development of a country.

He had been to the computer center before for a visit. He remembered that there had been three machines supporting the programming services of the whole region. They had only run for about two minutes, but the booming sounds were already getting lighter. A few missiles passed in the sky above their heads while the armed helicopter was still flying in the air. The cannon launched the missiles, leaving two very long clouds in the sky.

A giant, 8-meter tall monster with numerous bones and thorns on its body was roaring furiously. Suddenly, it got shot in the head by a machine gun, blood gushing out of its skull as its head exploded in less than three seconds.

There were about 7-8 piles of carcasses on the ground. There were also two auto-cannons and three tanks, but most of them remained stationary. Every once in awhile, they would fire, but the situation was still manageable. Luo Yuan was stunned. He did not think that they needed any more assistance. They had more than enough weapons already.

Chapter 191: Difficulties

A few hundred meters away there was a tower surrounded by heavy engineering machines and heavy-duty trucks with several big containers. One of its walls had been bombarded, and a giant server was still visible from the ground. Luo Yuan looked up at the tower while the soldiers tried to move the giant server into a big container by using a crane.

Luo Yuan entered the defense base, which was made of several giant rocks. There were many medium to light weapons inside, acting as an emergency defense line.

“Xiao Fei, we're short on manpower. Why is there only a helicopter? Where are my 2-meter diameter missiles? This is not enough,” a guy with a smoked face and a messy beard complained as he shook hands with the Colonel.

“Buddy, you know that we have a limited supply of weapons, right? Stop thinking about the missiles. You should be grateful that you even have a helicopter. The other teams are also having a hard time, and we have no more soldiers at the military base,” the Colonel said rudely as he punched the man on the arm. Obviously, the two of them had known each other for a very long time.

“Oh, I haven't introduced these evolved survivors to you. They are very powerful,” Xiao Fei said seriously. “Both Mr. Luo and Ms. Mu are 5th level evolved people, while Ms. Wang and Mr. Xie are 4th level.”

Commander Xia quickly shook their hands and said, "It's great you that were willing to come here. The servers are too important to the rehabilitation center for us to give up. However, there is something I have to tell you..."

He looked hesitant, as if he was not sure whether he should tell them or not. He knew those people were arrogant, and he was worried that they might not be willing to follow the instructions.

"Commander Xia, we are recruited, so we are now your soldiers. You don't have to say much, we know it's a dangerous mission," Luo Yuan said, noticing that the man was hesitating to share.

The mission was a very challenging one, and they would need to have a centralized instruction system with high discipline in order to reduce any potential risk. Luo Yuan understood the importance of the servers to the rehabilitation center as well as the development of mankind.

The captain looked delighted as he tapped Luo Yuan on the shoulder. "Great! I know you have your own fighting style though, which will be a bit difficult to combine with front line soldiers. How about the reserve team? That way you can assist wherever it's the most dangerous."

"Sure," Luo Yuan said calmly.

Fatty Xie did not dare protest, even though he was not happy that Luo Yuan had represented them.

“How’s the situation now?” Xiao Fei asked.

“There was a tough battle about an hour ago, but nothing serious until now. I'm afraid this won't last long though, as lots of sea monsters are moving to land,” Commander Xia said seriously.

“All these marine animals have nothing better to do? Why are they coming to land?” Xiao Fei asked as he kicked a stone on the ground. “What’s the sea level reading at the moment?”

“Based on our report, the water has reached the industrial area, which is five kilometers away from here. We are not sure why. You probably did not notice the mutated algae on the surface of the seawater, but it looked like a carpet. Even the tanks couldn't move through it.”

“Eutrophication,” Luo Yuan said.

"That's right. The nitrogen and phosphorus from all the feces, corrosive substances and daily waste have been eliminated into the sea and caused the algae to grow out of control. A lot of plankton was attracted, the big fish ate the small fish, and finally, the sea monsters joined the party," Commander Xie explained.

Luo Yuan felt depressed. Suddenly, a huge volume of air was released by a mysterious energy, and a human shadow appeared. It was too sudden, and Luo Yuan was caught by surprise. He naturally jumped six to seven meters away into the air and pulled out his Zhanmadao. In less than a second, the Zhanmadao was placed against the throat of the mysterious man.

If Luo Yuan had not managed to hold himself back, the man would have died. He looked as pale as a ghost, and he did not dare move an inch.

“Calm down! Calm down! He is one of our people!” Commander Xia said quickly. It had all happened too suddenly, so it had taken him some time to recover. “Put down your sword, put it down.”

Luo Yuan realized he had misunderstood. The man was in an army uniform and had some paint on his face. It was obvious that he was a soldier. Luo Yuan quickly pulled back the Zhanmadao and said awkwardly, “I’m sorry, I was just surprised because you appeared so suddenly. I overreacted.”

“It's alright,” the evolved man, called An Ying, said shyly. He looked socially awkward and frightened as he gasped.

Everyone was curious about him. The scene they had just watched had reminded them of teleporting in movies.

Finally, An Ying recovered and said, “Reporting, sir! There are three light green and green mutated beasts seven kilometers away heading in this direction. Please be prepared.”

Everyone looked tense. Commander Xia quickly pressed on his the walkie talkie and gave a few orders. After a moment, the helicopter flew off the ground and An Ying disappeared again, teleporting one kilometer away. After a while, he had totally disappeared.

A few minutes later, a loud sound came from afar and smoke started rising up. Apparently, there was a fierce battle going on. They could hear the conversations on the walkie talkie.

“Killed a small one. Oh no! It's spraying water! I'm going to lift it now! That was lucky, I almost died man!”

They could hear a man gasping on the other side. He sounded frightened as he said, “You son of a bitch! I'm going to kill you! Damn it!”

“Damn it! Five more are coming! We don't have enough bullets! We need to get more from the base. We're heading back.”

The helicopter flew up into the air and headed back to the military base.

“Damn it!” Commander Xia pressed on the walkie talkie again and said, “Get all the cannons ready!”

“Yes, sir!”

“Yes, sir!”

Every once in a while, they heard a roaring sound, followed by a ground vibration. After a while, two scary sea monsters slowly appeared. Their skin was greenish-black with big yellow spots, and

they looked like turtles without shells.

They seemed to have gotten hurt by the attack of the helicopter. There was blood and holes all over their bodies. However, their injuries were not life-threatening for a beast about 20 meters long and over 10 meters tall. Finally, Luo Yuan understood why the soldiers needed their help. No bombs or bullets could hurt the beasts if the soldiers did not aim at their weakest points.

“Let them come closer! Ready, fire!!” Commander Xia ordered as he saw the beasts approaching. Modern cannons could shoot very far those days, even at a 10-kilometer distance, although that was not as accurate. The closer the mutated beasts got, the higher possibility to kill them would be.

Suddenly, the two auto-cannons launched the missiles.

Boom!

One of the missiles hit a beast on the head, making it explode on the spot. Another missile hit the leg of the second beast, wounding it severely. The beast seemed to be in extreme pain as it rolled around on the ground.

The bombs had been modified to be more powerful than the two 2-meter diameter missiles of the helicopter. They had killed a sea monster and injured another one with just a single launch.

“Why did you stop firing?” Luo Yuan asked curiously as he saw

Commander Xia not giving any more orders.

“We are short on bullets and bombs,” Commander Xia said with an awkward smile.

It was dangerous everywhere, and the resources in the rehabilitation region were insufficient. Due to the high demand from all the teams, there was a limited number of bullets and bombs given to them. Theoretically, the soldiers should have gone back to the military base. However, the computer center had been safer after the mutated beasts had retreated, so they had decided to take a look around and see if there were any resources that they could bring back to the base. None of them had expected to bump into the sea monsters.

Luo Yuan was stunned as he asked, “How many are there left?”

“Eight 2-meter missiles and 30 mortars, plus 5 containers of machine gun bullets,” the Commander said.

“It should be enough. We just need to keep fighting for another 3-5 hours. It should be alright.” Xiao Fei looked at the worksite as he estimated the time.

Luo Yuan did not feel right. He knew his B-Level Mission would not be that easy to complete.

Note:

Eutrophication is the excessive richness of nutrients in a lake or other body of water, frequently due to runoff from the land, which causes a dense growth of plant life and death of animal life from lack of oxygen.

Chapter 192: Specious

"Do you have a cigarette?" Luo Yuan asked Commander Xia. Although he had quit smoking a long time ago and was no longer addicted to it, he felt an urge to smoke that particular moment.

Commander Xia was stunned for a moment. He hesitated a little, but in the end he took a pack of cigarettes out of his pocket. The box was much shorter than the usual one and didn't have any company logo on it.

Luo Yuan took a glance at it, and asked doubtfully, "Is this a special kind of cigarette?"

Commander Xia did not deny it, "You could say that. But it's not what you're thinking. It's an internally supplied cigarette. It's not sold to outsiders. It's only for people who are under a lot of pressure or facing great danger. Do you want to try one?"

"It sounds so high class. I want to try one, too!" Fatty Xie said eagerly as he heard them.

Commander Xia threw one to him. Fatty Xie caught the cigarette and sniffed it. "It's been so long since I last smoked. I'd almost forgotten what cigarettes smell like."

Luo Yuan took one too and looked at it curiously. The cigarette was somewhat shorter and thinner. He took out his lighter from the survival kit in his pocket, lit it up and sucked it deeply into his mouth. As his body constitution had been leveling up, his lungs

had also become more sensitive. He coughed loudly during the first few drags, but got used to it after that.

He found that the cigarette tasted weird. The different flavor and the smoke in his stomach caused his emotions to run a little wild. He looked at Commander Xia and asked, "Is there something wrong with this cigarette?"

"This is not designed for normal people. An extra ingredient has been added to stimulate the mind and ignite excitement," Xiao Fei explained. "In fact, you would not want to smoke it unless you're under too much pressure."

"Is it a drug?" Wang Shishi asked curiously, her eyes blinking.

Fatty Xie looked surprised. He studied the half-smoked cigarette, not sure whether he should throw it away or keep it.

Commander Xia sighed. "You are not wrong, but you have nothing to worry about. It's not addictive. After several formula improvements, there will not be any impact on one's health either. It will just help soldiers overcome fear and pressure, as well as enhance combat effectiveness."

"Actually, this kind of thing exists in all big countries under a different name. Some call it 'courage injection', others 'life-saving pills', 'lucky medicine' and so on. They are all the same, but people never admit it. For example, during the Gulf War before the end of the world, there was a large number of veterans suffering from depression, memory loss and distraction. Do you think it was all

because they couldn't get used to life post-war? It was because they had been injected with psycho-stimulant drugs.”

“That year, there were more than ten wars more brutal than World War II taking place in China. Countless soldiers were killed and countless cities were occupied. Countless civilians died tragically, and some soldiers even committed suicide or fled. Without this thing to support them, the situation might have been even worse.”

Xiao Fei had stopped smiling. "After all, soldiers are only human. We experience fear and all sorts of emotions like everyone else. There were quite a few times during nighttime patrols that I heard soldiers crying," he said with a heavy heart.

Luo Yuan remained silent. He didn't stop smoking until he had finished the cigarette.

Suddenly, the injured giant beast stood up. When it saw the other beast lying on the ground, it roared sadly. It immediately turned and stared at Luo Yuan and the others angrily. It started moving its huge body, walking towards them.

"Oh, no. Commander Xia, it's heading for us."

"Seems like we have beaten down its wife and now it wants revenge," said a soldier from Sichuan.

"How can you be so sure? I think the dead one is the husband."

The soldiers seemed to be more relaxed because there was only one injured beast left.

"Stop talking nonsense. Be more serious! No. 1 Cannon, let's give it one more shot. Be more accurate this time!" Commander Xia commanded loudly through the mic.

"Wait," Luo Yuan stopped him. "If we're running out of bullets, we should save them for an emergency. I'll take care of it."

Everyone looked at him. Even Mu Wenwen, who had been keeping her head down, looked up.

Commander Xia hesitated. He looked at Xiao Fei, who nodded confidently, and then turned back to Luo Yuan and said with a serious expression, "Are you sure? This is not a joke."

Luo Yuan nodded and said, "It'll just take two minutes."

"Well... If you manage to kill this giant beast..." Commander Xia said loudly. He seemed to want to promise him something, but he did not have anything to offer. Luo Yuan was not a soldier. He remained silent for a while before finally adding, "I'll introduce my sister-in-law to you."

Wang Shishi snorted in discontent. She only looked happy again when Luo Yuan rejected the offer. All her respect and reverence had turned into love. "Brother Luo, can I go with you?" she asked sweetly.

"No, it's just an injured beast. You stay here, and I'll be right back," Luo Yuan answered with pride as he touched her head.

However, when he stared at the giant beast standing hundreds of meters away, his face instantly became serious. As he concentrated his Will, a halo flew before his eyes. He immersed his Will into his body, his heartbeat getting slower and slower.

The slower it got, the weaker he felt. After five seconds, his body was shocked, and he instantly felt the wonderful sensation of his body being integrated with the Earth. There was infinite power extending from his foot and spreading throughout every cell in his body. After his Strength had increased, his Earth Stomp had automatically leveled up from three to four points. Meanwhile, his Physique had also increased from one point to four. Once he entered the pulse of the Earth, his connection with the Earth became closer, helping him absorb more power.

The Earth was his back, the very source of his strength. When he switched to that mode, he had endless energy running through his body. He moved his foot and the rock under it exploded. In just a second, he flew out like a lightning. Everyone could feel the wind, but Luo Yuan was no longer to be seen.

Thanks to his superhuman Physique, he sprinted forward, the wind ahead of him hitting his clothes. Their additional ability to balance the airflow caused an air swirl to form behind him.

"Is he an evolved human?" Commander Xia asked in shock as he

looked at the scene taking place before him.

"I heard that he is an Earth type evolved human," Xiao Fei explained. He also seemed to be in shock. "But he is too fast. I don't think even a level five evolved person could achieve that."

"Do you think he took the genius pill?" Xiao Fei muttered.

Fatty Xie looked serious as he stared at Luo Yuan. He knew perfectly well how strong Luo Yuan was. He would have no chance of fighting back if he got into a fight with him. He would just get killed. Wang Shishi was the only one who looked proud. She had lifted her chin slightly, as if she was the one being admired, but she was also concerned about Luo Yuan's safety.

In just a few seconds, Luo Yuan had flown a few hundred meters away and stopped a few meters before the sea monster. The monster was more than ten meters tall and ten meters wide. Its huge body looked just like a small hill, giving off a sense of intimidation. Its size was ten times larger than the light green level giant he had faced before. He had never met such a giant beast on land.

However, although its giant size gave it limitless strength, it also made it even more sluggish. It might be very flexible in the water thanks to its huge flat feet, but when it came down to it, it was no better than a blue rank mutated beast. Luo Yuan felt a little relieved. He had thought that the monster was very strong, but in fact, once a sea monster moved to the shore, it was much easier to beat than he'd originally thought.

Of course, it was Luo Yuan who could beat it in all aspects. He basically had no shortage of abilities. He was fast to react, and he had the sharp weapons that could deal the most damage. The angry sea monster had barely noticed the small figure standing not far from it. In its blood-red eyes, Luo Yuan was just the strange creature who had shot its partner to death and injured it. It had completely lost its mind. All it wanted was to get revenge.

He wanted to kill the creature, and then swallow it into its very stomach. The monster struggled to move its huge body while it roared angrily.

When it got closer, Luo Yuan lifted his foot, the veins in his forehead popping out while the blood inside his body boiled. For a time, he felt as if he had lifted up the whole earth, until he used up all his strength and stepped down on the ground heavily.

Boom!

Suddenly the ground shook. It looked just like boiling water. The sand and rocks seemed agitated, bouncing a few meters into the air before turning into powder and landing on the ground. Even big chunks of rocks and thick trees turned into fine pieces under his tremendous power. The giant sea monster was already very sluggish, but this sudden force made it lose its balance and fall heavily to the ground.

There was dust everywhere within a radius of five meters, and the monster could barely see anything. There was only a small

black shadow running at lightning speed, the dust having no impact on it at all. When Luo Yuan got close enough to the sea monster, he jumped five meters into the air and landed on the beast's shoulder lightly. The monster had a pungent smell to it, and its skin was very smooth and lubricated with mucus. It was very slippery, but Luo Yuan managed to stay still.

Once he landed, he took out his Zhanmadao. The sword shined under his fully concentrated Will. Just as he was about to stab it, the monster instinctively felt the danger and reacted. It shook its body, but it could not shake Luo Yuan off. He quickly balanced on it by adjusting his center of gravity to the monster's movement. Before he could feel relief though, he saw a seven-meter wide flat foot coming towards him.

Before the foot could reach him, he felt a strong gust of wind. If he got hit by that giant foot, he certainly would not be having an open casket funeral.

"Damn it!" Luo Yuan cursed.

He instantly jumped off the monster's shoulder and fled across its throat, his Zhanmadao in his hand. He aimed at its thick throat and stabbed it, using all his strength. He made a one-meter wide wound on it, cutting off the monster's entire throat cartilage.

He fell to the ground and rolled for a while, escaping from the beast under the cover of the dust. When he was tens of meters away, the slow-moving sea monster finally roared. The sound was like air leaking out from a high-pressure pipe. Soon, the smell of blood spread out into the air.

Fear of death hit the sea beast, which began to get crazy. It looked like it wanted to find the little insect that had hurt it. Hundreds of tons of gravel splashed up by its flat feet. For a while, it was as if the sky was raining debris. Luo Yuan could not help but keep backing away. He watched from afar as slowly the movement of the sea beast got smaller and smaller. A few minutes later, he heard the sound of something heavy falling. The ground shook a little before it finally quieted down.

Chapter 193: Collapse

“That’s it?” Commander Xia asked shockingly and said, “It’s not even two minutes!?”

“Precisely. It is about 90 seconds and the battle was probably only about 20 seconds.” Xiao Fei said as he looked at his watch repeatedly.

“Seems like the people in the military base were real!” Commander Xia said. “I thought that was just a marketing strategy. The world has changed and we might be eliminated soon.”

“Stop your jealousy! Our genes are too stable and very difficult to be mutated. Some people could evolve just from consuming a piece of flesh from a light blue level mutated beast. However, people like us might not be able to evolve even if we get injected with pure mutated blood. Also, stop dreaming about retirement, it's almost impossible now.” Xiao Fei said, and then he whispered, “There are wars every day in the rehabilitation region and the military department is recruiting new soldiers every moment. We might be sent to the front line as well after completing the current mission.”

Commander Xia looked depressed. He took out a packet of cigarettes and put one into his mouth and said, “Hopefully we will have a longer break after this. I haven’t gone home for almost a year! I don’t think my own daughter can recognize me now.”

“Fortunately, I didn’t attend the speed dating party in the camp.

Else, I'll be just like you now." Xiao Fei said. He seemed to have worsened the commander's situation and made him feel even more depressed. The Commander then wiped his eyes and said, "Sigh, let's stop talking about it. The guy is coming."

The marine monsters slowly appeared in front of them. The marine beasts must be taken seriously as even the weakest one is already dark blue level and most of them are light green level. Luo Yuan could no longer kill them alone and had to fight together with Mu Wenwen so that he could reserve some energy for a more critical time.

She worked well with Luo Yuan and it was so easy for them to kill all the light green marine monsters. Most of them were stabbed by Luo Yuan in their brain. However, Luo Yuan realized there were some weaknesses in Mu Wenwen's powers. Most of the time, she needed a few seconds just to get ready to use her power. She would be putting herself in danger whenever she readies herself.

She could easily kill marine monsters which usually move at a slow pace on land but it is difficult for her to kill those which are used to living on land. It was not recommended for her to be within 100 meters of any beasts as she would easily die if she is not careful enough. Land-type mutated beasts are as fast as Luo Yuan and due to their physical size, 100 meters is equivalent to just a few steps for them.

Her power serves as a supportive attack only and she can hardly survive independently. Most of the marine monsters appeared alone instead of in a big group and they were moving very slowly. Thus, it was not too bad for Mu Wenwen. Wang Shishi helped

occasionally too and she killed a light green mutated marine monster by herself.

Her flying shuttle was at green level after being modified using the eggshells of the Archelon. It is now sharper and stronger than Luo Yuan's Zhanmadao. The marine monster was unlucky as it slowly came up to the land with the help of its tail and a pair of fins but was immediately killed by Wang Shishi's flying shuttle.

Fatty Xie's power was restricted by the marine monsters. He could not do anything but observe from afar. Time had passed and the sky was darkening. There were a few stacks of carcasses all over the place and the ground was red in color. The air smelled awful due to the blood.

Many equipments were being kept in containers as they were ready to return to the base. The soldiers and Luo Yuan finally felt relaxed and they did not expect the mission to be completed in such a short time.

"I'm really grateful that you were willing to come, otherwise, we would have given up on them." The Commander said.

Luo Yuan wanted to say a few humble words but suddenly frowned as he realized his heartbeat was fluctuating.

"What happened?" The commander asked.

"Hold on, something is wrong." Luo Yuan looked very serious

and asked, “Do you feel the ground shaking?”

Commander Xia shook his head. Luo Yuan looked at the rest to confirm Commander Xia’s answer. None of them felt anything. He was probably more sensitive to the changes underground as his power is related to the earth. He felt something moving in the ground and it was making its way to the surface.

“I don’t feel it. Do you sense something wrong?” The commander asked doubtfully.

Luo Yuan did not say anything and closed his eyes to focus. Everyone looked nervous now as they believe Luo Yuan had very powerful senses and would not joke around with these sorts of things.

“Move backwards! Everyone, moves backwards!” Suddenly, he opened his eyes and looked very serious. He then quickly grabbed Wang Shishi and kept her in his arms. He then started running backwards frantically.

The rest immediately sensed something and quickly stepped back, however, it was too late. The ground about 10 meters in front of them suddenly exploded! A few of the soldiers got hit in the face by sand and rocks and immediately became the corpses. In the next second, a snake-like giant silver creature rushed out from underground. Half of its upper body was floating in the air as its eyes were watching the soldiers on the ground.

Everyone was under extreme stress from what they just

witnessed. Most of them looked very pale and their limbs were numb. Luo Yuan almost stopped breathing when he saw the scene. The entire body of the monster was silver in color and very shiny under the sunlight. Its body looked long even though the lower part was curled up. There was some colorful fur at the end of its tail and there was a red comb on its head like the crown of a king.

The creature had evolved from a snake and most parts of its body looked very similar. It looked amazingly beautiful and majestic but everyone was frightened including Luo Yuan.

The gigantic silver snake looked at Luo Yuan for a second with its clear eyes and then looked at the stacks of carcasses scattered all over. No one knows how long it has been hibernating underground but they guessed that it was attracted to the smell of blood. Everyone was still too stunned to do anything.

Then, one of the soldiers lost his control due to extreme fear and pressed the trigger of his machine gun. Numerous 3mm bullets fired at the body of the silver snake, however, it had very little effect besides a few pieces of its scales falling to the ground.

“Damn it! Fire! Fire! Attack!!!!!!” The Commander immediately ordered the soldiers to attack. He was lucky that he did not get hit by the rocks earlier, but there were several blood spots on his face from the injuries caused by the sand and mud.

At this point, the soldiers would not stop firing even if he did not give any orders as they were so near to the God of Death that they almost peed their pants.

Chapter 194: Unpredictable Moment

The guns and cannons kept firing away but this was a top level mutated beast so it did not have much effect. How fast can a snake be? Well, according to pre-apocalyptic research, once a snake gets within a good attacking distance of its prey, it can attack and bite it in 0.1 seconds (that also includes injecting venom). Due to human limitations, it was truly difficult to capture the movements of the snake.

As for this mutated beast, it is basically faster than an ordinary snake so it was expected that its speed was incredibly fast! Everyone felt helpless and even hopeless. In just a second, the armored vehicle which started shooting at the beast seemed to have disappeared completely-only leaving behind a bloody and oily smell in the air. In the next second, numerous parts of the vehicle rained down from the sky and half of the vehicle was in the mouth of the giant mutated snake. The thin armor of the vehicle definitely could not withstand the snake's sharp and strong teeth which had completely sunk into the vehicle. It seemed inevitable that the soldiers inside the vehicle were all dead by then.

The giant mutated snake seemed to know that the vehicle was not a living creature; it spat the vehicle out hundreds of meters away and upon hitting the ground; it exploded. As the entire scene was too crazy for them to fathom, everyone subconsciously stood still and became very quiet. Nobody dared to move to prevent the giant mutated snake from noticing them.

The crystal clear but cold-blooded eyes of the snake started to glance through the crowd; scanning from left to right to find its next victim. Through its eyes alone; fear and horror could strike

those who looked into them. The only thing on their side was the fact that the snake was no longer in optimal condition due to the series of attacks it endured moments ago. Most of its scales were shattered and its skin was slightly injured too; there was blood slowly oozing out from its body.

The atmosphere became very depressed as everyone was hit hard by the fear of death. Suddenly, a self-propelled artillery caught everyone's attention (including the giant mutated snake) as hydraulic jet sounds were particularly clear in such a quiet environment. The snake looked at the weapon and its sharp teeth became visible. "Oh no!" Luo Yuan's heart was pounding quickly in his chest. In just a second, he saw a black shadow fly past him with strong wind circulating around it.

The next moment, he heard a loud noise - Booommmmm! The self-propelled artillery was hit badly by a huge force. As a result, its ten-meter-long barrel was broken and its armor was completely damaged. At the same time, a few soldiers nearby were subsequently killed as they had no chance to react when the heavy machine flew in their direction. Their bodies were crushed and blood splattered everywhere.

The giant mutated snake did not stop there; it took notice of another self-propelled artillery and was ready to attack. Perhaps it could sense the danger and threat posed by the giant metallic monster so it lowered its head and stretched its body; its giant tail swept through the ground and all the fortifications around its vicinity were wiped away instantly; even a few boulders weighing several tons were blown away.

Within seconds, the other heavy self-propelled artillery was hit badly and was no longer recognizable. All its parts were scattered everywhere and the remaining steel case flew a few meters away. The snake then continued to attack the remaining vehicles around the area.

Everyone else was lying on the floor and dared not make any moves. Wang Shishi was hugged tightly in Luo Yuan's arm; her face was filled with fear and her body kept on trembling. It was rare for Luo Yuan to have a strong feeling of helplessness. If the snake were to be in front of his face right now; he would not be able to defend himself from its attacks. He was scared and for the first time, he felt like fleeing.

However, he quickly snapped himself out of his fear. He knew well enough that he would die even faster if he attempted to run away. Looking at the entire team on the ground, the giant mutated snake seemed to jeer at them. It slowly wriggled forward, but its speed was considered fast to them.

The snake's silvery scales reflected the light from the Sun and several soldiers could not keep their eyes off its huge body in front of them. They couldn't help much as their bodies were already weak and out of strength. The snake suddenly lowered its head, and unfortunately one of the soldiers was already in its mouth.

Upon realizing this, he screamed hysterically and tried to struggle but very soon the screams faded and disappeared. His whole body was swallowed into its stomach in an instant. The rest of the soldiers became frantic after seeing this scene. They jumped up and began to shoot at the snake. As brave as they were, the

bullets hardly inflicted any pain on the snake's body. Instead, the soldiers were swallowed into its stomach one by one.

Fatty Xie who was very near to the scene was already prepared to fight, but this time he was totally frozen in fear. The deaths and screams in front of him drove him crazy. He noticed the sky turning darker and a strong wind blew towards him. He was stunned but immediately stood up, gathered his strength, and took a leap! He managed to escape to a place five to six meters away. He had never been so fast before, but he suddenly felt a pain on his waist.

"Nooooo!!"

Before he died, he seemed to hear his bones being broken and right after that, he lost his consciousness forever. Luo Yuan took a glance and immediately turned away. His face carried all sorts of negative emotions. Fatty Xie was already running very quickly! His speed was equivalent to about thirteen points, but still, he could not escape from the snake.

Luo Yuan secretly estimated the success rate of the team if they tried to escape, however, the result was disappointing. No matter how he calculated, they had very little hope. The snake was just too fast and no one could escape from it. It was impossible to wait for it to go away after it was full because at its current size, it would probably just be half full even if it ate everyone here.

"Bloody hell."

The screams of the soldiers disappeared one by one, and soon it would be their turn. Luo Yuan was anxious and a trickle of sweat slid down from his forehead. Suddenly, he noticed Commander Xia who was ten meters away from him. His head was bowed down as he attempted to camouflage himself in the grass; but his hands seemed busy doing something. Luo Yuan was able to sense very quickly that his hands were holding level five explosive bombs! He was using grass to pull all the lids together.

"This is..." his face slightly changed as he spoke. He was stunned and hesitated for quite a while, but slowly he let go of Wang Shishi and told her softly, "You stay here and be careful."

"Luo... Brother Luo... don't go... you will die..." Wang Shishi was scared for herself and for him. She was still gripping on to Luo Yuan's clothes.

"Don't worry, I am very powerful. I will not die easily." Luo Yuan squeezed out a smile on his face to try to comfort Wang Shishi.

Wang Shishi shook her head and did not let go of his hand. Tears rolled down her eyes as she uttered, "But... But I'm still scared."

"Don't cry. Stay here and do not move no matter what happens." Luo Yuan slowly took Wang Shishi's hand away and rubbed her head softly.

Then, Luo Yuan just turned away and tried not to look at her face full of tears. He took a deep breath and crawled towards Commander Xia slowly. He constantly heard the screams of

soldiers indicating their imminent death. He tried very hard to keep his head low and did not even dare to take a glance. He simply relied on his skin and nose to sense the surrounding.

Commander Xia's position was about seven to eight meters away from where Luo Yuan planted himself. There were two or three more soldiers nearby so he didn't look too noticeable here. This would be the best distance for him to attack; if he stayed too close he would attract the attention of the snake and lose his best opportunity.

Suddenly, he noticed a strange phenomenon... about twenty meters away, Mu Wenwen was lying alone on the ground. There were no other soldiers around her-apparently all the soldiers in the area were already eaten by the snake. Luo Yuan disregarded her but continued to focus on the snake. His entire body was tensed to the point that the veins on his forehead had popped out. He kept low on the ground and stretched out his arms and knees, the soil on the ground was slightly moved by his foot. With this position, he could have more power to leap forward when the right opportunity arose.

Finally, the snake stared at Commander Xia. The sight of its eyes made him shiver. He held the bombs tightly in his hand waiting for the right moment to present itself. At this point, suddenly Xiao Fei pressed and held on Commander Xia's hand. He said calmly, "There are people waiting for you to go back. Let me go before you."

"You....." Commander Xia lips trembled as he spoke; he did not know what to say.

Xiao Fei then picked up the mortar beside him, placed it on his shoulder, and fired. The bullet hit the unsuspecting snake which was only around ten meters away. Everything happened so quickly again but this time the snake was not aware of the attack beforehand thus it was a direct shot which hit its stomach and exploded.

"Roarrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrr!" The giant mutated snake roared in pain! Despite how powerful it was, it had a petite body which was light; thus the explosion of the mortar made its body tilt to one side.

"Good chance!" Luo Yuan whispered as he prepared himself to attack.

Two big holes could be seen on the ground where he positioned his feet. He ran at lighting speed towards the giant mutated snake with his Zhanmadao hanging on his body. His eyes were fully focused on the head of the snake. He had actually never been so focused before. He gathered his will and a hazy light surrounded his entire body. It was clearly visible on this bright sunny day.

His speed was picking up and with only two steps he leaped up into the sky. He was too fast and what everyone could see was just a myriad of dust and rocks forming a mini-tornado behind him. There was only one chance, either he would be alive or dead at the end of it. Simple as that.

He kept his eyes sharp and after a few strides, he was already very close to the snake's head. At this time, the snake had

recovered from the initial attack, and its cold eyes were ferocious. When it tried to raise its body to kill this "insect" that hurt it, Luo Yuan had reached close to it with his Zhanmadao; aiming for its jaw.

Everyone held their breath looking at this scene as if the time had just stopped ticking. What they saw next was the jaw of the giant mutated snake raised up a few meters and at the same time a black shadow was thrown into the distance.

"Roarrrrrrrrrr!" the giant mutated snake indicated that it was in severe pain.

Everyone quickly stood up and some of the soldiers even began to run away. Some of the sharp-eyed people noticed that there was a knife jabbed into the snake's jaw. The knife had completely penetrated its jaw to the point where only the handle was still visible.

Wang Shishi knew that Luo Yuan was the black shadow thrown into the distance. She screamed loudly with fear in her mind. She disregarded the fact that the snake was still alive and quickly ran towards Luo Yuan.

Chapter 195: Subconscious

Wang Shishi could not stop crying when she arrived at Luo Yuan's side. She saw how much he was suffering and it was killing her. Luo Yuan appeared severely injured and his body was as hot as boiling vapor. It looked a bit pinkish with a strong smell of blood. Apparently, the blood inside his body was circulating very quickly which caused many of his capillaries to burst and clot under his skin.

Luo Yuan forced out a smile when he saw Wang Shishi rush to him. He threw up some blood and uttered, "Don't... worry... I'm... fine."

"Help me get up." Luo Yuan said.

How could he still be fine when he was clearly in agonizing pain? Wang Shishi was crying even more at that stage but she quickly wiped away her tears and said, "Wuwuuuwuuuu... You don't move."

She then sat on the ground and lifted Luo Yuan's head and shifted it to her lap. He was actually fine but he was just over exhausted after using too much of his strength. The reason he vomited blood was probably due to injuries to his internal organs. Luo Yuan was having a very serious body ache and his muscles were very tight. However, that kind of injury was not really serious to him as he would recover after a few days even without receiving any treatment.

About one minute later, his physical strength slowly recovered. He slowly sat up and spat out some blood again which had accumulated in his lungs earlier. He was not used to being hugged in a little girl's arms, especially with that added piece of flesh on her chest. Her breasts were covering his face as her body was trembling in shock. He found it very arousing for some reason.

“Lie down, please.” Wang Shishi said as she saw Luo Yuan trying very hard to get up. She forgot to use her hand to support him as she was still crying from the nightmare that they just got out from. Luo Yuan looked at Wang Shishi and felt that her actions were both adorable and amusing. Also, the fact that she rushed to his side without being concerned of her own safety was quite heart-warming.

He said, “I’m fine, I wasn’t hurt. I am just very exhausted. Let’s go, we need to leave this place. Please, help me.”

This was certainly not a safe place. The giant snake was still trying to attack even though it looked like it was going to die soon. Most of the trees were damaged and the buildings nearby had collapsed as well. A few giant rocks which weighed about a few tons flew past Luo Yuan’s head. One would definitely die if they get hit point blank by these boulders. Of course, the probability of that occurring is not that high. However, if those stones fell like rainfall it could really hurt them. Luo Yuan got hit by a few small ones earlier. Fortunately, the stones were not powerful enough to hurt Luo Yuan who is relatively strong. Otherwise, he would have died earlier.

Despite her state of shock, Wang Shishi was still able to listen to

his instructions. She wiped away her tears and helped to support Luo Yuan to his feet. She was also utilising her telekinesis power to protect him. Luo Yuan tried to get up from the ground with her aid but struggled. This time, he had used too much of his strength and his muscles were extremely sore. He felt as though his limbs were paralyzed to some extent. Luo Yuan's injuries looked more serious than the ones he got from his previous battle and he did not know whether his will could help him to recover quickly this time. Apparently, it was not a good time to do any treatment.

He smiled with pain and slowly walked forward. After taking a few steps, Luo Yuan was surprised that a few people were running towards him. It was Commander Xia and a few soldiers. Some of them brought the first aid carrier along with a bulletproof jacket.

Along the way, some stones had hit a few soldiers who then fell to the ground. They quickly picked themselves up and continued running. Unfortunately, out of the blue, a soldier got hit by a huge rock while he was running and then fell on the ground and died. However, none of them stopped to check as everyone was busy running for their lives.

“Let us carry him.” Commander Xia and three soldiers rushed to them and said to Wang Shishi who was still gasping. The four of them were the only soldiers who survived the battle.

Luo Yuan looked really tired with numerous wounds all over his body. He was surprised and touched by the actions of the soldiers. He would not have had any hard feelings even if they did not offer to help or just watched him walking slowly. After all, he killed the giant snake to save himself instead of rescue them. He would have

run away if he could. Luo Yuan would help if he can, but he definitely would not sacrifice his life to help someone else though that will never restrict him from respecting those who are willing to sacrifice their lives to save other people.

“You, you guys...” Luo Yuan took a deep breath as he tried to utter something.

"You've saved our lives, this risk is nothing compared to what you have done for us." One of the soldiers said to Luo Yuan.

“We need to leave this place first.” Commander Xia urged them.

Luo Yuan felt guilty and nodded. He said to Wang Shishi, “Shishi, please lookout for those rolling boulders and flying stones.”

Her telekinesis power is actually ideal to protect them from the stones as long as the momentum was not too high. Wang Shishi nodded and a few of soldiers carried Luo Yuan and ran towards a safe place. Luo Yuan quickly rested and hoped he could recover as soon as possible. He realized he could now focus his will properly. It was just as simple as drinking a cup of water. That was a good thing and allowed him to focus on healing.

He initially thought it was only light injuries to his internal organs and muscles but he was completely mistaken. Most of his muscle fibers had been torn and a significant amount of his capillaries had burst; most of his internal organs were severely injured and even his bones were shattered which caused serious

internal bleeding.

A normal person would have succumbed to his injuries if they were as serious as his. At this rate, it might take more than 2 days to recover. To make things worse, he had already utilized a lot of his will earlier in the battlefield. He could only do some simple treatments based on the will he had at the moment and then he would have to wait for his will to be revitalized in order to resume. The only positive was that he was surprised that his treatment process was faster than ever. The torn muscles began to connect when his will scanned through the fibers. He was amazed and then focused on the treatment.

The muscles were reconnected and the clogged blood in the capillaries had been unclogged. Even the cracks in his bones had recovered in just a few minutes. He suddenly opened his eyes as he was shocked by what he had just experienced. He was sure that his will was revitalized and was still healing him even though it should be depleted by now. He quickly opened the status panel and realized he had overlooked a notification.

“Your will has hit the upper boundary and upgraded under the threat of death. Will +1”

Luo Yuan was delighted and he was particularly attracted to the words, “will has hit the upper boundary.”

He was in deep thought reflecting on what had just happened. His most recent battle was definitely the most dangerous one of them all. Despite having killed many light green level mutated beasts, most of them were actually marine-based monsters which

had lost some power upon rising to the land. Based on this experience, he learnt that it was actually the ground-type mutated beasts which he had to be more careful of. He was aware of his own power and classification which is between light green and green level. A green level mutated beast could easily kill him just as easily as he could easily kill dark blue mutated beasts.

Previously, he could simply kill the mutated beasts with his high level of dexterity but it was not enough to fight with the giant snake as he could not even follow the actions of the snake. He knew that he could not escape in time which drew him to the conclusion that his power, dexterity, as well as his physique, were weaker than the giant snake's.

He had only a 30% chance of killing the giant snake even when it was distracted by the bombs. It was not difficult to imagine how stressed he was as he was struggling so hard to survive the battle. It was as if he entered into a different world when he met with the giant snake. Nothing else was in his eyes except the target and his blood was boiling throughout the whole process.

The surroundings were very quiet and Luo Yuan's vision was blurry. Every single step he took consumed a lot of his energy and his body felt as if it were floating in the air.

“There must be something to do with the will.” He thought.

“My will is the most mysterious among the properties. I must have increased my speed and power subconsciously under the threat of death. The need to survive possibly helped with breakthroughs in my abilities and hence allowed my body to

perform extremely well.” He wondered.

Luo Yuan then questioned himself, “But why couldn’t I do that previously?”

He knew it was quite common for people to perform better during critical times even before the start of the apocalypse. For example, if a woman's son was stuck under a car, she would somehow be able to lift the car and save her son. The car is definitely heavy and under normal circumstances the woman would not be able to lift it. However, due to the anxiety and stress she was facing upon seeing her son in danger, she will try her very best to move the car by focusing all her energy and strength.

Even a normal person could do it but Luo Yuan could not make it happen until today. There must be something else behind his powers. His will is too important to him as it could be very helpful to kill green level mutated beasts if he could master it.

Although he almost collapsed after using his will (and the fact that it only worked for a short time), it was better than waiting to die. He realized his ability to focus and concentrate on his will is actually weaker than normal people’s. Even though normal people could only focus their will for short periods of time, it is very powerful. The challenging part for Luo Yuan was that this skill is not something he could easily master through practice.

Luo Yuan soon realized that he could not hurt himself because that action is going against his subconscious ability to protect himself. In order to experience a breakthrough, Luo Yuan needs to neglect the injuries to his physical body.

“Oh! My subconscious...” Luo Yuan sighed. He wondered if he should learn to hypnotize himself. Although he has never tried it before, it was probably a good idea if he needed to control his will to utilize his super strong power. This was especially useful in extremely dangerous situations like the one they just encountered. Luo Yuan smiled sadly at that thought and prayed that he will never get to be in that type of dangerous situation again. Suddenly, he felt groggy. The soldiers put the carrier down on the ground but he did not get up; instead, he continued lying on top of the carrier.

Luo Yuan has a relatively good understanding of social interactions. He knew that it would be quite bad if he immediately gets up and acts like he was totally fine once they put him down on the ground. After all, a soldier lost his life just to make sure Luo Yuan could be delivered back safely. What would the soldiers think if he just gets up from the carrier and looks like he is perfectly fine?

Although their thoughts would not affect him much, he did not want to hurt those soldiers who tried their best to protect him along the journey by risking their lives.

Chapter 196: Unexpected Discovery

Before their journey, there were slightly more than twenty soldiers. Now, only four soldiers remained including Commander Xia. Everyone looked gloomy and tired; sadness flashed in their eyes from time to time. Although it was a norm to witness death since the outbreak, especially for these soldiers who always faced uncertainties in their life, they would still mourn for a while before they started to get busy again.

The remaining firearms and ammunition were all kept by the soldiers; categorized into different wooden boxes one by one so that they could load them into the truck easily. A soldier then picked up a weapon and a shoe from the ground; suddenly his eyes shed a few teardrops and he secretly wiped them away. He turned and crouched down to hide his face.

Mu Wenwen and Wang Shishi also helped within their capabilities. No one wanted to speak so it was completely quiet and depressing. Under this atmosphere, Luo Yuan could only afford to lie down for a while. He then slowly stood up. Wang Shishi noticed him and quickly dropped the bullets in her hands and ran over; even Commander Xia and his soldiers stopped their work and looked at him in shock.

"Brother Luo, have you recovered?" Wang Shishi asked in surprise.

"Do not worry, I am getting better. I have a strong body, with such injuries I can recover very fast." Luo Yuan answered and smiled. This explanation made a lot of sense. Some evolutionary

humans did have amazing healing abilities; even if there was a hole in their body, they could recover speedily. Everyone was well aware of this fact.

"It is truly good news to see your recovery; without you, we would've died a long time ago. There is nothing much I can say except thank you. We owe you a life." Commander Xia spoke gratefully with his rough voice. He looked tired.

"This is too much, I am also saving myself here. If I didn't kill this giant mutated snake we will all die together." Luo Yuan shook his head and said. He did not want to bear this kind of gratitude for no reason, he did not deserve it.

"Our soldiers can distinguish what is good and bad, no matter what we all know that you saved us a life." Commander Xia responded and continued, "If you have a chance to go to the redevelopment area, feel free to come and look for us whenever you encounter any difficulties. We are in the new 18th Army 11th Brigade – group B. However, this is assuming we are still alive."

Luo Yuan nodded, accepting the appreciation from these soldiers. However, Commander Xia noticed that Luo Yuan did not seem to be interested in what he had just said. He then spoke again, "You've never lived in the redevelopment area before so you might not know how tough the situation is. There are limited resources available. For tighter regulation of key materials including meat and food, it can only be purchased through tickets. With the tight supply, a lot of people do not even have enough to eat. Because us soldiers risk our lives every day, we enjoy some small privileges. You see the bodies of these mutated sea beasts? If this happened in

the redevelopment area, with so many level five types of meats, it is enough to cause chaos in the city with everyone wanting to buy it. But it is worth nothing here. In the redevelopment area, the distribution of most of the mutated meat will still be managed by the government. Thus, in order to stimulate the enthusiasm of the soldiers and to encourage civilians to join the army, the government will secretly leak out resources out to the soldiers. The amount is still considerably big as most of the mutated meat sold in the black market are sourced from the army. You should understand what I am trying to say by now."

Luo Yuan tried to nod more convincingly now. Times have changed. Being in the army had also been a career with high risk and high income. If he wanted to make good money, building a good relationship with Commander Xia was definitely a good path to go. However, he had been living in the occupied areas for so long that money was no longer that important to him, thus, Luo Yuan did not want to think much about it until he was back to redevelopment area.

Commander Xia still noticed that Luo Yuan was not genuinely interested in what he had just said. In a way, he could totally understand it. Such a strong evolutionary human would definitely be appealing no matter where he went. The government would probably recruit him to do something so money was definitely not an issue to him.

"Anyway, what is your plan for this snake?" He asked Luo Yuan in an attempt to switch topic.

It was not usual to see a level six mutated beast even in the

redevelopment area. Its resources are important materials for war. Commander Xia hesitated slightly and said, "It was killed by you, so I will let you decide."

At the moment, the body of the giant mutated snake was still moving but its movements were much milder than before. It was mainly only its tail that was still moving whereas its upper body had completely stopped and was lying idle on the floor.

"I will just take a part of it and you as well as your team can have the rest." Luo Yuan shook his head and said. Besides, he could not take too much along with him.

Then he focused his attention back to the giant mutated snake and asked the few soldiers, "Do you have a knife?"

"Is this ok?" A soldier pulled out a foot-long knife from his boot and handed it over to Luo Yuan with respect.

Luo Yuan took it and touched the blade; he shook his head in his mind. For general use, this knife was sharp enough but it definitely could not be compared with the Zhanmadao. He guessed that it would probably not be able to penetrate the skin of a blue level mutated beast. However, his Zhanmadao was still inside the throat of this mutated giant snake, so this knife would be the best option for now.

"Thanks, I will give it back to you later." Luo Yuan said casually.

"Ah You're welcome, feel free to use it as needed." The soldier was not particularly talkative but answered excitedly.

Luo Yuan wiped his face and realized the dried scar on his face had peeled off-exposing the inner layer of his skin. He held the knife in one hand and quickly walked toward the snake. Less than a minute later, Luo Yuan was already close enough to the snake. The giant mutated snake that was so fierce ten minutes ago could not even give any response now. Luo Yuan observed the area which he stabbed the snake based on the handle which was still exposed outside its body. Apparently, his Zhanmadao has penetrated its head and cracked its skull.

Luo Yuan was focused and knew he should not be careless. He held the soldier's knife firmly and walked around the snake to check on its condition. He only relaxed a little when he confirmed that it had already died. To be honest, this was also the first time Luo Yuan saw such an exquisite mutated beast. Every inch of its body was filled with mysterious colors and every scale was shiny and was about the size of a football. There were also some complex patterns on it.

Its wide mouth, red crown, and tail, had amazed Luo Yuan. Even though it was dead, its prestige still surrounded its body and made people feel pressured when they were near it. However, Luo Yuan was not afraid. He had killed it even when it was alive so now that it is dead he was more relieved.

Luo Yuan checked again and again until he finally confirmed that the snake was definitely dead. He then tried very hard to pull out his Zhanmadao but failed. He tried again and again but it was still

not moving. Only then did Luo Yuan notice that the snake barely bled and even the wound that the Zhanmadao caused it was already tightly sealed.

"It has such a scary self-healing ability, I am afraid that the Zhanmadao has been fully integrated with the tissues of its body." Luo Yuan thought in his heart. He had to use his remaining will to tear off the muscles around the wound before he managed to pull out his Zhanmadao.

When he held the Zhanmadao in his hand, he felt strange. He was very familiar with his weapon now and he could clearly be able to tell if the knife was lighter by even one milligram. Now, not only was the weight a lot lighter, the material seemed to have changed. He carefully looked at the Zhanmadao and his face changed. The black synthesized Zhanmadao had now turned gray. Luo Yuan was very familiar with this color as it should be the original color of the Zhanmadao. However, just to be certain, he used his identification power to check. As expected, all the synthesized features had gone and it was back to its original form. It was undoubtedly an unpleasant shock for Luo Yuan. Apparently, all the synthesized essence had been absorbed by the giant mutated snake. This was really a scary thing but it made Luo Yuan even more excited about its meat.

Luo Yuan ripped off two scales from its body and although they were only about two to three milliliters thick, they were extremely heavy. Each piece weighed about a kilogram. Luo Yuan tried to bend the scale but failed. Of course, he had limited strength now as a result of their battle. The durability and flexibility was undoubtedly good. The best-synthesized knife not only had to be hard but also had to be flexible or else it would be easily broken.

Obviously, these scales were good material for his knife.

The material of the Heaven's Pillar Tree that he used last time was flexible but not very hard even though it was also green level material. The Zhanmadao was still fairly good if he were to use it to fight against light green level mutated beast, but it was definitely no good for killing green level mutated beast. Luo Yuan had always been somewhat dissatisfied with it and now that he had a chance to resynthesize it, he wanted to get the best material for it. Luo Yuan chose a good spot to hide from the soldiers and started his synthesis process. In total, he used up five scales to complete the synthesis. In just a moment, a shiny brand new Zhanmadao appeared in front of him. He looked closely and noticed that the knife was not only silver in color, but there were actually complicated fine black patterns on it. Luo Yuan could not wait to use his identification power to analyze it.

"Dragon Scaled Zhanmadao"

"Material: 6m alloy, bloody Dragon Scale"

"Rarity: Green."

"Weight: 14kg"

"Attack Power: 36-51"

"Additional Abilities 1: Attack speed 2"

"Additional Abilities 2: Separate soil and water (passive), whenever it passes through soil or water it will cause them to be separated. (Slight effect)"

"Equipment Requirements: Strength - 14 points"

"Remarks: This is a mysterious Zhanmadao. It carries a mysterious force with it, although its power is weak."

Luo Yuan was excited with his new Zhanmadao. Its attacking power and speed had significantly increased. He was curious about the two supplementary effects and the evaluation. He quickly tested them out but the results were disappointing. It really had a mysterious force that was unexplainable.

When he put the knife on the floor, the soil beside it quickly separated; leaving a foot-deep and an inch wide concave hole. However, the effect was not very good on stones as there was no effect if the target size was as large as a fist. Luo Yuan could not think of any use for it since he would not be using it to drill the ground. It might be useful on water but there was no water at the moment so he could not test it.

Anyway, other than all these strange capabilities, the brand new Zhanmadao was definitely better than the previous one. The only thing that concerned Luo Yuan was that the ability to absorb life had disappeared. If there was any injury in future, he had to think of another way to cure it. However, since they were going back to the redevelopment area, they might not need to risk their lives anymore.

Subsequently, Luo Yuan started to cut off more parts of the snake. He was quite skilful nowadays at doing such jobs. To avoid any sudden twitches from the snake, Luo Yuan opened up the scales below the neck looking for a gap. Then, he gathered his will and stabbed directly into the central nervous system to destroy it. The body of the snake tensed up for a moment and remained motionless after that. Once the danger was removed, Luo Yuan started to take out the inner organs slowly.

Its organs, gall bladder, and brain, were taken away and separated into a small packages made from the snake's skin. All these wrapped packages were still moving, and one kept on bouncing. Every single bounce was one to two meters in height. There was once that it bounced five meters away.

Luo Yuan quickly took it back again and opened it. It was the snake's heart, which was still expanding and contracting. It was still pumping even though he already took it out for ten minutes. To avoid it from moving away again, he cut it into half.

“Eh?”

There was something that attracted Luo Yuan's attention. There was a red and yellow irregularly-shaped object hanging on the top of the left atrium. It looked like a stone grew in its heart.

"What is this?"

He used his fingers to pinch and pull it out. He realized that the

heart immediately stopped beating when he took the object out. He quickly used his identification power to analyze it.

"Active energy collector."

"Grade: Inferior"

"Weight: 0 kg"

"Remarks: This is an inferior active energy collector which contains a lot of impurities. The active energy collector can store energy more efficiently than fats. It is commonly present in green or higher level mutated creatures. Through a lot of eating and other means of energy absorption, it can store the excess energy in it for necessary use."

Chapter 197: Evolve

“Active Energy Enrichment.” Luo Yuan could not hold in his excitement any longer as he finally found something extremely valuable. The scales and heart of the snake or any other valuable part of previous mutated beasts that he had found could not match this rare treasure. Most mutated beasts possess active energy and their level will be higher as their power and active energy increase.

That kind of energy could be directly absorbed by the human body to improve its physical strength. Based on his knowledge, it was common that an individual's dexterity, strength, and physical condition will be upgraded to 11 points if they consumed the meats of dark blue mutated beasts over a long period. Moreover, they could be upgraded to 12 points if they consumed the meats of light green mutated beasts in the same way. And that's just from eating normal meat.

It's difficult for the free form of active energy to be better than the solid form of active energy. In fact, it is also very difficult for Luo Yuan to upgrade at this point as he was already so powerful. The precious meats which people see as treasure is basically just normal food to him which can only fill his stomach.

Normal people could easily upgrade their power by eating the flesh of high-level mutated beasts. But Luo Yuan could only rely on the system and his training to upgrade himself slowly. Lately, he seems to have reached a limit and he began to feel helpless as the missions were getting more challenging but his power still remained unchanged.

This 'treasure' which looked like a stone gave Luo Yuan hope. He quickly kept the energy stone into his pocket. In order to make sure he did not miss out anything else, he checked everything once again. All the internal organs were removed, the brain has been checked and even the stomach inside the snake's thoracic cavity has been dissected.

There was only one precious stone and he could not ask for more. He wrapped everything in a huge piece of snakeskin and it was about 150 kg. The internal organs and brain weighed almost the same weight as an archelon's eggs. Luo Yuan carried the whole bunch of internal organs on his back and walked back to meet his team. Of course, he had kept his upgraded Zhanmadao into its sheath to avoid questions from the rest.

They were done moving the things in less than half an hour. After that, a few cranes and two heavy trucks with empty container moved towards the giant snake's carcass. There were about 7-8 soldiers which jumped down from the trucks and started to dissect the giant snake with an electrical saw. They were working very quickly without hesitation.

One of the soldiers was trying to check the snake's stomach to see if the dead soldiers had left anything inside. Unfortunately, there was nothing left as everything had already been digested. Although the carcass of the giant snake was smaller than the sea monster's, it was actually about a meter thick in diameter, around 50 meters long and 30-40 tons in weight. It would be very difficult for the two trucks to send it back if they did not pack it properly. The bones of the giant snake were extremely strong, probably stronger than most normal metals, as a few of their saws broke throughout the dissecting process. When they were done with the dissection,

the cranes began to move the dissected carcass into the empty containers.

The rescue mission had finally come to an end. Two heavy bulldozers were moving forward to push away all the rocks and trees in front to make a pathway. About 20 heavy trucks were then following from behind along with other vehicles which formed a line.

Luo Yuan and the other survivors were seated in one of those heavy trucks. The surviving soldiers began to cry as they could not hold their emotions in anymore. Even the talkative Wang Shishi remained silent at that moment. Apparently, the ending of the battle was worse than what they could imagine.

The entire journey was a bumpy one as the roads were terribly damaged. They finally made a stop somewhere after traveling more than an hour for about 20 km. Luo Yuan got down from the heavy truck and was shocked by the scene he faced. The military base looked like a worksite as there were more than 100 heavy trucks lined up and the containers were carried by an electromagnet to be moved to the safe room of the military base. They looked so tiny when they were in line with the other trucks.

Commander Xia and a few soldiers greeted them and then jumped down from the truck. They then walked towards the military base. Luo Yuan and the other two also followed them. The big iron door in front of the military base was opened. It was very bright inside and a huge object was surrounded by many trucks. Many containers were being moved into the huge object. Upon closer observation, it was a giant dark gray transport aircraft that

looked really strong and much bigger than normal commercial aircrafts. The sheer magnitude of it amazed many of them

“Such a big airplane!” Wang Shishi was amazed and naturally stopped walking.

“This is the latest military cargo aircraft in China. Its body is 55 meters long and its height is 15.6 meters. It can carry up to 146 tons of weight. It was planned to serve the military officially in 2017, but it has to be used earlier due to the urgent need. We have been manufacturing 150 of this type of aircraft in half a year and we have ten in the military base.” Commander Xia explained proudly.

100 cargo aircrafts is not a small number. Even the US only had a few hundred cargo aircrafts in total despite being the most advanced country in manufacturing.

These were not peaceful times and the war was with mutated beasts instead of human beings. Kindness is not allowed in battles. Everyone is a warrior and every resource has to be used to fight.

Commander Xia and a few soldiers were lectured by someone of a higher status even though they had just arrived recently. Apparently, Luo Yuan and his friends did not look like soldiers, so the major hesitated and then got another soldier to send them back to the hostel. Luo Yuan opened the door and put down his parcel. Huang Jiahui and the rest rushed to him. Everyone felt relieved when they found out that both Luo Yuan and Wang Shishi were fine.

Wang Shishi described their adventure which caused them to feel scared. In fact, the mission was a lot scarier than what she was able to describe but it was unnecessary to explain these things in detail to prevent them from having nightmares. Huo Dong asked about Fatty Xie as he did not see him around. Everyone sighed when they learned what happened to him on the battlefield. Life becomes so fragile at the end of the world.

Luo Yuan told them he needed some rest as he was exhausted from the battle. Many people quickly left after Huo Dong used his eyes to signal them. Luo Yuan then shut the door and took out the active energy stone he found inside the heart of the giant snake earlier. He paused for a while as it was a risk to consume it.

No one knows the effect of eating that stone. It's possible that he would evolve just like Chen Xianfeng. Luo Yuan put it near to his nose and smelled it. It had an awful smell but he seemed to be addicted to it and it made him feel hungry and motivated.

For safety purposes, he pulled out his Zhanmadao and cut a thin slice of it first. He finally put it into his mouth after a short hesitation. It melted in his mouth just like ordinary refined sugar. He swallowed and what was left in his oral cavity was just the awful scent. After less than 20 seconds, Luo Yuan's eyes slowly grew bigger as if he received an electric shock. He felt good and excited and it felt like every single cell in his body was trying to absorb the active energy.

His skin turned red and his bodily temperature rose to around 60-70 degrees Celsius. However, he did not feel it at all. In fact, he felt warm and comfortable like he just took a hot shower. The heat

lasted for about 5 minutes and then stopped. Luo Yuan recovered and checked his body but he did not feel anything wrong with it. He felt good and energetic, just like when he got his Earth Stomp ability.

He quickly walked forward and pulled out his Zhanmadao. He practiced striking it in the air and then kept his saber back into its sheath again. He was delighted as he realized his power has been upgraded but sadly nothing changed for his dexterity and strength. After that, Luo Yuan divided the leftover energy stone into three and then put one into his mouth again.

He experienced the same feeling again but it was five times more powerful than the previous one and it lasted longer. His skin was now dark red and his nose almost puffed out smoke. His skin was getting tighter and firmer; his bones were getting stronger; and all the cells in his body were transforming.

It was still changing when the system beeped again. “Active Energy Body Consumption, Physique +1”.

Chapter 198: Seeing The Giant Lizard Again

The attributes points were clearly valuable.

As soon as Luo Yuan was notified, he was absolutely delighted. He brandished his sword and tried again, only to discover that in addition to his physique, his strength had also inflated. Compared to his initial condition, it achieved an almost sixfold increase.

Seeing this, he did not hesitate but to put the remaining two into his mouth.

Initially, Luo Yuan had thought that this time round, the sensory stimulation would be stronger. But apart from a slight reaction in the beginning, everything was calm the very next moment, with not a hint of change, as if what he just consumed was distinctively different than the one he had earlier.

He had an inkling that his body could possibly been repleted with energy.

It could even last him ten days or even half a month, without food. His whole body was brimming with energy, as though with immeasurable power.

His assumption was as good as gold, upon discovering a yellow-red spot the size of a needle in the left atrium of his heart.

It was constantly changing, persistently growing.

It never bothered him in the beginning. If it was not for his Will that magnified his inner vision, he would not have even noticed it in the first place. But with the constant blood flow gushing about, the continuous growth of the small spot in question could now be detected by the naked eye. Within just a few minutes, it had now grown to the size of a soybean. No further development was observed since then.

This particulate bioactive-laden enrichment was almost an exact replica of the original, but only a size smaller. With its development, the palpitation of his heart had become stronger, the blood flow seemed more intense, and his whole body was bursting with energy.

This was it.

In the beginning, Luo Yuan was fascinated by the mystery of particulate energy enrichment; even feeling awestruck by it. After all, it bore some similarities to a few incidents that had appeared in China's myths and legends – intriguing him even more. But alas, after experiencing its formation within his own body, the once-mysterious occurrence passed into oblivion.

Similar to one who had consumed too much fat, the surplus of nutrients naturally forms a layer in one's body. This works the same way, only in a more efficient and orderly manner.

Luo Yuan felt slightly disappointed. He had initially been looking forward to it, especially when his other attributes, such as

Strength, would be experiencing a slight increase. Unfortunately, the final outcome did not live up to his expectations.

He looked at his sticky limbs and torso, and adjourned towards the bathroom, with two washbowls and towels in tow.

The water supply from Hucheng City had long been disconnected, but fortunately, there was no water shortage, as the boilers provided hot water daily. Water that had not been purified by means of heating was deemed unsafe, which was the sole reason why cold water was not found in the region.

Luo Yuan filled up two of his washbowls to the brim, before letting it cool down slightly. He then undid his bulletproof vest and clothes, and began to take a bath.

At 78 degrees Celsius, the heat of the water did not adversely affect his body at all. The stains and blood were washed away; revealing his smooth alabaster skin. Luo Yuan reached for the towel to dry himself, but as he was drying himself, he paused to look at his body briefly.

His skin had been always fair, but after experiencing a slight increase in his Physique, his skin had become even more alluring; tighter and smoother, with pores shrunk to the size of needlepoints. With a closer look, his skin now seemed flawless and creamy, with a sheen similar to that of a jade.

He had become less of an ordinary person. Luo Yuan shook his head, breaking his reverie as he continued to dry himself.

Luo Yuan also had his clothes washed after his bath. Having its fabric synthesized from the feathers of a mutated beast, his clothes were non-absorbent and was completely dry after several wrings, right after taking it out of water. As Luo Yuan headed back to the dormitory after getting dressed, he was greeted by the lieutenant officer that came by in the morning, already waiting at the door with another two soldiers.

“Comrade Luo Yuan, the leader has commanded me to inform you that we will be departing this evening at 8 o’clock. If you wish to bring your battle beast along, bring it in immediately,” said the lieutenant, once he spotted Luo Yuan.

“Thank you,” said Luo Yuan.

“I am merely obeying orders,” said the lieutenant without so much as a crack of a smile. With a stern face, he continued, “Civilians are not supposed to wander around like that, please come with me.”

Luo Yuan returned to the bedroom, put down the washbowls and took his Zhanmadao, before following the officer out of the military base. He noticed that almost all the containers have been moved, with only a few trucks still waiting in line. At this rate, everything would be ready in less than half an hour. Luo Yuan snapped out of his thoughts and continued to follow the lieutenant onto a wheeled armored vehicle.

Dusk has begun to descend upon them, and the sky darkened

gingerly.

After half an hour, upon Luo Yuan's request, the armoured vehicle stopped at the foot of mountain.

"Is it here? It doesn't seem like your beast is anywhere around at all." The lieutenant said.

Luo Yuan sized up the surroundings with a glance; they had originally parted ways here. He then responded, "It could be wandering around close by."

"Should we take you around to look for it?" He frowned.

"No, it should not be too far from here." said Luo Yuan confidently. He placed his hand onto his lips, and blew a sharp whistle. The sound echoed endlessly between the valleys.

Then, Luo Yuan began to wait patiently.

One minute, two minutes, three minutes... and soon, a whole three minutes had passed, but not even a slightest movement was seen. A few soldiers could not help but to whisper among themselves.

"It's here." Luo Yuan said suddenly.

Just as the lieutenant was about to speak, he felt a slight tremor

on the ground. He followed the direction of the sound and looked towards the distance, only to see a cloud of dust slowly forming, some few kilometers away. A blurry, small dot was moving at high speed towards their direction. At first glance, it seemed to only be a little spot, but as it came closer, its form had rapidly magnified.

Moving at the speed of light, the rumbling sound could be heard from afar, akin to the sound from a high-speed rail before the apocalypse occurred.

The lieutenant inhaled a breath of cold air, and subconsciously tightened his grip on the handgun. Until he was able to compose himself, he noticed that he had broken out in cold sweat. With such an incredible speed, he would be no match against the level five mutated beast.

The giant lizard ran wildly towards them, and was more excited when it saw Luo Yuan.

Until it was approximately ten meters from his master, it suddenly remembered its hard-earned lesson. Its body then came to an abrupt halt, akin to how a brakes of a car would. The inertia from the stopping motion of its gargantuan body brought about a huge impact to its foot, which caused the cement on the road to crack, leaving a series of potholes from where it stood.

The lieutenant, blown by the strong gust, could not help but to stare helplessly at the cement road that they had spent so much effort and resources to build. It was now reduced to a complete mess, as if barraged with artillery. His face twitched slightly in frustration, but as they were already leaving tonight and may not

return, there was no point in worrying about the road conditions now.

The giant lizard lowered his head, and affectionately nudged Luo Yuan's chest.

Despite its ferocious looking face, it was heart-warming and moving to watch.

Luo Yuan looked at the giant lizard's level of loyalty, and was overcome by emotions. Despite releasing him into the wild for a few days, he had not expected that his pet's level of loyalty could possibly increase – now at a staggering 87 points.

Looking at the fresh wounds on its body, it was clearly not smooth-sailing for the giant lizard. This was why its loyalty level increased. By comparison, it truly recognized the difference between good and bad living conditions.

With such level of loyalty, it now seemed like it would not object to any of Luo Yuan's orders. Feeling satisfied, he gave the lizard's head a pat, and instead of getting back onto the truck, he leapt onto the back of the giant lizard. Upon Luo Yuan's signal, the few dazed soldiers finally responded, started the armored vehicle and moved forward.

At the same time, the giant lizard also began to move, as it effortlessly kept up with the team.

Chapter 199: Boarding The Plane

After a few minutes, Luo Yuan had arrived at the military base, atop his lizard.

As their return had long been informed, the surrounding army patrol showed no sign of unease, but from time to time, the soldier would stare towards their direction, keeping vigil.

The lieutenant picked up the walkie-talkie and started to establish contact.

A moment later, two heavy cranes towing an empty container each, appeared from the military base, followed by an SUV. The containers were set down, and behind it were seven to eight engineers donning safety helmets, alighting the SUV. One of them walked towards Luo Yuan.

Luo Yuan pacified the stressed lizard as he dismounted. He briskly walked a few steps forward to greet the engineer.

They shook hands, but the latter's eyes secretly darted towards the lizard nearby, who was emitting a rather intimidating aura. He could not resist but to gulp, forcibly calming himself and said, "Hello, hello, your beast is too large to fit into our standard containers. We must now measure its size and make the necessary adjustments to our container. Taking into account the beast's temperament, as well as the possibility of danger, we would have to sedate it first."

His demeanor did not bear any authoritative military disposition, but instead behaved meekly, akin to a technical staff of a factory workshop. This must mean he could have only been recently enlisted into the service.

“No problem, sorry to trouble you,” Luo Yuan said politely.

“No, it’s no trouble at all,” the polite man waved it off, while opening a small tool box that was in his hand. Inside, laid a large syringe with a needle, and an electric drill. "This is a specially formulated sedative with a very strong effect. Even a level five mutated beast would normally be sedated for five to six hours. However, if the sedative was used for the second time, the period of its effect would be reduced progressively, after all, a mutated beast's resistance towards drugs is far too strong.”

He passed a syringe needle as thick as an arm to Luo Yuan. Inside the syringe, was a light blue liquid.

As Luo Yuan received the syringe, he took a look at it, and skeptically asked, "Is one needle enough?"

“In general, one shot is enough,” the military engineer said confidently. "But it would be difficult to inject the needle through its thick skin. Normally we must use the electric drill to penetrate it with a fresh hole.”

“No, the electric drill is not necessary.” Luo Yuan rejected immediately. He took the syringe needle, and skeptically walked towards the giant lizard. It had a lot of wounds, some of them were

fresh, and parts of its body were still oozing with fresh blood. So there was no point in making another open wound.

Luo Yuan was worried that being too near the head would affect the future intelligence of the giant lizard, thus he chose a safer spot near the hip area, and injected without hesitation, gently pushing the liquid into its body.

To the giant lizard, the sensation was akin to just an itch. It only gave a puzzled look at Luo Yuan before ignoring him. But very soon, it began to feel uneasy. Its body was starting to feel numb, and it was gradually losing its strength.

After a minute, its body suddenly became weak and fell heavily onto its knees to the ground.

It wailed incessantly, and struggled to stand up; its eyes looking up at Luo Yuan's.

The soldier nearby started to retreat slowly, in order to avoid any imminent outburst.

Unable to figure out why, when Luo Yuan looked into the eyes of the giant lizard, he felt uncomfortable. He went over and stroked the giant lizard's head, and continued to pacify it.

Under Luo Yuan's reassurance, the giant lizard's uneasiness gradually died down, and very soon, his eyelids grew heavier and heavier. As minutes passed, it drifted off into a deep sleep.

The group wiped off their cold sweat, and waited until the sedative unleashed its full potential, so that the giant lizard was no longer prone to react dangerously to the external environment. Afterwards, a few men began to measure the size of the lizard meticulously.

After measurements were made, an empty container was cut open with flames, and necessary modifications soon ensued.

Two hours had already passed when everything was ready.

The container was evidently one size larger after the modification, the walls had also become two layers thicker. The container looked extremely solid, obviously with the intent of preventing the giant lizard from causing damages after it awakened.

The unconscious giant lizard was carried by the crane into the container, and was welded shut, leaving a gap the size of a basketball, on the outside.

“Is this for breathing?” Luo Yuan pointed to the hole and asked. He had been observing the scene.

“This is to connect the cooling tube. When the temperature decreases to a certain degree, your battle beast would enter a state of drowsiness as its metabolism rate will decrease to its lowest. The air in the container is more than enough for the beast in its current condition, thus, there is no need to leave any air holes.”

“Don’t worry; the beast viability is much stronger than you think. We are very experienced in this, nothing will go wrong.” a middle-aged military engineer said with an assuring smile, as he sensed Luo Yuan's concern.

After listening to him, Luo Yuan finally calmed down.

The time had just clocked in at 7.30pm when the speaker at the military base suddenly blared, “All the soldiers and survivors, come to the boarding hall immediately, the transport planes are about to take off.....”

The survivors had already received the news earlier, and after hearing the orders to assemble, they suddenly poured out of the sleeping quarters, with a look of excitement and ecstasy. Some of them were even shouting like madmen.

Luo Yuan and his company, were already standing by the door.

“Have you remembered to bring everything? Did you leave anything behind?” Luo Yuan asked.

“We have already double-checked a few times,” Huang Jiahui said, her face was filled with excitement.

Not only Huang Jiahui, but all of their faces lit up with excitement, their eyes were shining brightly, the kind of brightness that resonated with hope.

It was at this time that one started to realize how precious life was before the apocalypse. Although the condition in the reconstruction area was not ideal, and may not even have enough for any provisions, but solely for the safety of the environment, it very much won over the other factors.

“Then, let’s move out!” said Luo Yuan.

Luo Yuan and company followed the crowd to the boarding hall; soldiers were already there helping to maintain law and order.

The huge transport planes, as large as the beast were arranged in two columns. Under the light, the dark gray metal was tinted with the colour of the dark, cold light. The runway in front of the boarding hall had long been lit with two rows of lights, extending to a few kilometers away, and was particularly visible under the dark night of the apocalypse.

“In order to ensure the safety of the transport planes, all guns and weapons must be handed over before boarding. Those who are found smuggling arson would be expelled from the military base,” a captain officer said sternly.

No one had questioned the order, thus everyone silently handed over their weapons to the soldiers. Several survivors were found to have hidden their weapons, and were caught by the soldiers. With faces full of fear, they repeatedly pleaded; some were even kneeling, begging for mercy. But it was futile to beg the soldiers, as no matter how much they struggled or resisted, one by one, all of

them were pushed into the armored vehicles and were escorted out of the military base. One of them even attempted to fight back, but was instead shot dead on the spot and haphazardly tossed outside.

Heavy penalties were deployed during turbulent times, not to mention that this was a military base.

Everyone was shocked by the scenario. For some of the survivors that had ulterior motives, they no longer wanted to push their luck. They readily surrendered all their weapons, and even small pocket-daggers were handed over.

Just when Luo Yuan had considered looking for an acquaintance to assist him, a soldier came over and said, "You and your company, come with me."

"Hey Brother Luo. Here, you will be boarding this one." Before managing to even take a few steps, Commander Xia was seen walking over and greeted them.

Chapter 200: Static Electricity

Commander Xia brought Luo Yuan and his team quickly towards the last transport plane, along with Mu Wenwen.

The transport plane was a very wide one, especially on the inside. Apart from the container where the giant lizard resided, it had a refrigerator and only a few other goods. Needless to say, the whole plane seemed rather empty.

The plane was not the least bit cosy, as it was never meant for public charter. They did not even have any basic chairs, let alone velvety soft carpets or luxurious interior décor. The guests had nowhere to sit but on the floor. Fortunately, the inner walls had metal rails, which they could at least hold on to.

After Commander Xia and a few soldiers brought them into the plane, they did not budge, and decided to stay put. This was due to the fact that Luo Yuan and the rest were not common survivors, but ones with immense destructive power, who must be kept under vigilant surveillance. However, such intentions were not stated outright in a blunt manner, as the soldiers were mostly mere acquaintances.

Their eyes were darting around the plane, with an initial feeling of novelty, which soon wore off. The interior was encrusted with exposed metal; filling the air with a pungent, rusty smell. The interior workmanship was no better; rough and shabby, with some parts welded carelessly, resembling a poor excuse of a twisted earthworm. Likewise, the iron flooring was not the least bit smoothened, with remnants of metallic pricks and debris on it.

The transport plane gave them a glaring impression that it was built in a hurry.

However, this was expected, as artisans during wartime did not have the luxury of time to meticulously work through the details, and unlike more tranquil working conditions, quantity triumphed over quality

Time was ticking slowly and soon enough, more than 10 minutes had passed.

The engine roared from afar, and one by one, the transport planes breezed through the long runway and made its way into the air. Soon, it was their turn to adjourn.

Their bodies swayed slightly as the planes took off. Huang Jiahui, who was beside Luo Yuan, suddenly clung onto his arm tightly and nervously. The rest were no better. They held onto the railing as tightly as they could and their bodies were tense; rigid with nervousness.

In fact, Luo Yuan was worried too, but he didn't let it show.

As an evolved human with innate connections to the earth, he could feel a sense of insecurity as he was lifted off the ground. Furthermore, the earth was still a world dominated by mutated beasts, who could ever guarantee that the sky was safe? It was a risky adventure for him indeed.

When Commander Xia saw that everyone was laden with unrest, he assured, “Many will have similar reactions during their first flight. Rest assured, we have taken such flights several times now. Generally, most mutated birds aren’t active during the night. Even if they were, most of them would not be able to fly up to 10,000 meters high. Therefore, flying at night would usually be safest time for us all.”

They heaved a sigh of relief upon hearing the commander’s reassuring words.

At that very moment, their body sank with the inertia, as the heavy transport plane started to disembark from the runway and gradually heightened into the air.

“Commander, considering that you have been flying a few times now, haven’t you faced any dangers before?” Huo Dong asked bravely, at ease upon sensing Commander Xia’s relatively friendly demeanour.

The commander hesitated before he spoke slowly, “I wouldn’t say it’s 100% safe. After all, the current condition is no longer the same as before. Even though there aren’t any flying mutated beasts in the air, it’s still dangerous to fly in the sky. We had our transport planes fly back and forth, and out of five times, two planes had crashed.”

When they heard what Commander Xia said, their tranquil state of mind turned turbulent once more.

“Could the transport plane’s quality be responsible for those incidents?” asked Huo Dong, feeling tense.

“It could be, but the main reason is still the discharge of electricity at high altitudes, which seriously tampers with our electromagnetic waves. You’ll find out later.” Commander Xia said, with a slightly serious face, “Many newspapers are currently speculating that it could be the one causing mutation and global warming. Such phenomena were increasingly occurring, at greater strengths. A year ago, the electricity discharge was almost undetectable and did not affect the various instruments in the plane at all. However, as it was now more apparent, and if it was not for the anti-electromagnetic interference equipments in the planes, it would cease to function entirely.”

“This issue has not been made known to the public yet, to prevent panic in the society. So, please keep it between us.”

“It was said that the violent supernova explosion hundreds of light-years away had caused a massive stir in the galaxy. Besides, it had also stimulated the solar activities to be increasingly active and frequent. It was likely that after the stir-up, the mutation would cease, but we don't know how long this would last. It may take up a few years to hundreds of years.” His face further darkened upon finishing his sentence.

Apart from Chen Jiayi and the other kids who were unperturbed, the faces of the other adults had turned sour.

Luo Yuan had heard about such a theory prior to the apocalypse, but he was not concerned nor did he feel the need to question it, as he knew that there was nothing he could do. He was well-aware that the storm in the galaxy would not only cause mutations, but also had the power to adversely affect the atmosphere.

He felt conflicted inside, as the earth seemed so fragile, like an egg without its shell.

Luo Yuan was relieved to know that the storm in the galaxy was too weak to annihilate life on earth instantly. However, the storm was gradually getting stronger and nobody knew when it would hit an unbearable stage for all life forms on earth. After all, human beings were akin to frogs in warm water, only that frogs were still capable of jumping out upon sensing a rise in temperature. But alas, human beings can only struggle in vain, watching helplessly as danger draws closer.

Luo Yuan suddenly felt his skin mildly tightening and his hair began to stand on its end.

There were shocked; everyone could feel the static electricity. Their faces slightly paled in fear.

“Commander, look at the time! Why did it strike so quickly this round?” A soldier glanced at his watch doubtfully.

“It seems like it has only been 20 minutes!” Commander Xia checked the time in shock, “I’ll check the cockpit!”

Luo Yuan's heart skipped a beat while seeing the commander scurrying towards the staircase. He took only a minute and returned with a solemn expression. This reduced everyone to a bundle of nerves.

“What's the situation now?” Luo Yuan asked.

“We are currently flying at an altitude of 7,000 meters. Previously, static electricity only occurred with an altitude of 10,000 meters. It looks like its range had widened over the last few days. As the plane is about to cruise at lower levels, we should be alright. Just stay calm!” said the commander, forcing a slip of a smile.

“Do we have any parachutes in here?” Lin Xiaoji asked abruptly.

The Commander shook his head and kept silent. He was clearly not as calm as he appeared to be.

After Lin Xiaoji got his answer, he laid on the floor, crestfallen.

The strength of the static electricity was inconsistent, causing the light in the cabin to flicker in unison. Occasionally, it triggered sparks in the air, which then disappeared quickly, emitting a crackling sound. A weak odor of ozone-gas then filled the air.

The situation in the transport plane cabin appeared to be rather tense, as everyone was worried sick and their breathing had become heavier too.

All their hair was standing stiff on its ends as a result of the static electricity, but nobody was in the mood to laugh. “Don't worry, we'll be alright.” said Luo Yuan in dire attempts to comfort them, upon sensing their uneasiness.

Instead of only comforting the others, what he really was doing was indeed comforting himself too. He hated not being able to control his fate, and to surrender his life to luck. If he were to be on earth, he would at least be able to struggle out of this, instead of being incapable of doing anything but to rely on Lady Luck.

As the clock was ticking, their heart was palpitating according to the brightness of the light.

Then, the light blinked a few times, exploded with a few sparks, and turned off as though signifying something. The very next moment, a series of bangs were heard and all the lights immediately extinguished, and emanated a burnt smell. The cabin was engulfed in darkness with only a few weak lights flickering in the air.

The ladies were so frightened; they were screaming and their faces were white as sheet.

“Could you check if everything in the cockpit is alright?” Luo Yuan said to Commander Xia.

“I'll go now!” the commander stood up quickly while fumbling for his torch.

“Wait a second; I want to check it out too.” Luo Yuan shouted.

“Ok!” Commander Xia nodded without any hesitation. This act was apparently against their discipline but he no longer had a care in the world now.

They briskly walked upstairs, and opened the door of the cockpit. The light had malfunctioned there too; only leaving the instruments radiating with light, as they were still working perfectly.

Commander Xia immediately asked, “What’s happening?”

“We’re unlucky this time, as we’ve ran into a strong electromagnetic storm. Fortunately, the destruction wasn't critical. The backup electricity still works fine, only undergoing some complications with the electrical circuit outside.” The co-pilot said with a shudder, “But the weather conditions are not any good. The storm from the universe is somewhat intensive – causing instability to the ionospheric layer above, which may affect us anytime. We are preparing to fly another 500 meters lower.”

Luo Yuan looked at one of the meters on dashboard with a number showing 5000m, clearly indicating the altitude. Through the thick glass, he looked towards the sky in the distance. With his extraordinarily sharp eyes, he could see that imperceptible flashes of light haphazardly lit up the pitch-black sky, some colliding to form a thick electric arc.

At times, a bright gleaming light would flash across the sky, causing it to glow periodically. It was, however, difficult to imagine what the view would be like at a higher altitude.

“Can’t we possibly fly lower?” Luo Yuan asked.

As the two pilots did not recognize his voice, they turned around and looked at Luo Yuan with utmost surprise. Without commenting, they emphasized, “No, that would be more dangerous. The loud noise of the transport plane would provoke the mutated birds, causing them to attack.”

“How far is it to the nearest runway for landing?” Luo Yuan asked again.

“It’s about 1,200 km or approximately 3 hours.”

.....

The malfunctioned air-conditioning unit had lowered the temperature in the transport plane very quickly.

In less than half an hour, the temperature had almost hit 0 degree Celsius. Everyone was already gasping, with visible clouds of vapor in their breaths

Due of the initially warm temperature, they did not have much

clothes on their backs. They were still able to endure the cold nonetheless, thanks to their relatively good physical attributes, but not much can be said about the three kids.

They were freezing cold to a point where their lips had turned to purple, but they continued staying silent.

Huang Jiahui felt a pang in her heart and hugged Chen Jiayi. As she felt herself shivering, she requested, “Luo Yuan, get them some food!”

Luo Yuan nodded, walked towards the spot where they placed their parcels to pick up about half a catty of snake heart. He then brandished his Zhanmadao to cut it up swiftly in the air, and pieces as thin as a cicada’s wings fell onto a piece of the snakeskin. Then, he rolled up the snakeskin and returned to their side.

“Everyone, please have some to keep yourself warm.” said Luo Yuan, when he placed the snakeskin down.

They were already used to consuming raw food. Thus, they picked up a piece and put it directly into their mouths. Mu Wenwen, who had been silent this entire time too, picked up a piece naturally.

“This belongs to that giant snake, right? I can’t believe how all of you can bring yourself to stomach a raw piece of meat.” said Commander Xia, while sinking his teeth hard onto its strong muscle, failing to tear it apart with his incisors.

“Then, how else can we possibly eat it?” asked Huo Dong, swallowing it whole, without so much as chewing it at all.

“Eat it after grinding it into smaller pieces, of course! There’s no way to bite into it in this form at all.” Commander Xia was still unable to disintegrate it after several chews and munches. Knowing his efforts were in vain, he had no choice but to follow suit and swallow it whole.

“Such luxury is not possible given the circumstances. We’re already grateful to even have food to eat.” Luo Yuan also picked up a piece, put it into his mouth, and said with a smile.

“Yes, you are probably right!” Commander Xia ate a few pieces, before stopping midway, as it caused redness to his face.

Despite having half a catty of heart being rationed to so many people, there were still about seven to eight pieces left. Luo Yuan finished the leftovers and ended up eating more than everyone else did. However, everyone’s face was red and flushed, except for Luo Yuan’s, which was not in any way affected.

His heart was already saturated with the bioactive-rich nourishment; further consumption no longer yielded any reaction. In fact, he was growing increasingly ravenous, as his energy was inadvertently being absorbed by the substance.

Zhao Yali had a look of discomfort in her eyes, and swayed from side to side as if experiencing intoxication. Suddenly, she fell to the side slowly. Wang Xianguang who was beside her, noticed her

unusual behaviour and tried to help her. She touched her forehead lightly, but withdrew immediately and said in astonishment, “She’s evolving soon.”